

VOL. 4 NO. 2

JUNE
1901

PRICE 25 CTS

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ESSAY PUBLISHING COMPANY
NEW YORK

LONDON

PARIS

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TOWN TOPICS PUBLISHING CO.,

208 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK.

THE SMART SET

A MAGAZINE OF
CLEVERNESS

Vol. IV

JUNE, 1901

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*\$1,000 prize novelette.

†\$50 prize joke

‡\$100 prize short story.

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION \$3.00

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Issued Monthly by Ess Ess Publishing Company, 1135 Broadway, New York

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WILLIAM GREEN, Printer, New York

THE MIDDLE COURSE

By Mrs. Poultney Bigelow

Let a wife try—I do not say till seven times, but even to seventy times seven—to give her best to her husband, and get from him something that corresponds to it. Let her do that; but if, after all her endeavors, he not only refuses to give what her spirit asks of him, but to receive and acknowledge what it offers him, then is it not a mere senseless tyranny to ordain that things which one man has rejected as worth nothing she may not offer to another, to whom they would, perhaps, be everything?

Some of the women who, finding no love in marriage, have by the need of their nature been driven to seek it somewhere, are the women who, if married happily, would have been most passionately faithful to their husbands.—*W. H. Mallock, "A Human Document."*

MANY dramas, both tragedies and comedies, begin at a dinner table, though they seldom end there, unless one of the principal actors be choked by a fish bone or die of a "surfeit," like one of England's early kings.

There was, however, no hint of anything dramatic at the hospitable board of Mrs. Bertram Vincent on a certain evening in early June. The light of the candles fell pinkly on eight well-contented, gently pleased faces; four women and four men sat eating an exquisite meal and absorbing unconsciously the beauty of the scarlet and pink Shirley poppies, of the convolutions of rosy silk and of the unique pieces of silver that enhanced the purity of their spotless damask background. It was a gathering very representative of a certain section of London society—a most interesting section, some people would say—where bohemians have retained certain gay and attractive qualities and have added thereto a high degree of moral rectitude—and clean shirts. There were, besides the host and hostess, an actor and his wife, an American married couple living in London, a well-known sculptor and a lovely young woman

who was, for the first time since her marriage, dining out deprived of the protection of her adoring husband. The last, Mrs. Mellor, was the living incarnation of the smooth, delicately tinted beauties of a Christmas supplement, and to judge from her conversation, had as little mental depth as the supplement has material thickness.

She found herself not only unprotected by her Charles, who was out of town for a day or two, but next to an actor, and the unusualness of the situation made her heart flutter and her color deepen. But the flutter was that of a mechanical canary bird and the blush was produced by trepidation, not by any pleasurable emotion.

The actor was thinking that it was easier to play a double rôle for a hundred consecutive nights than to strike a conversational spark from this unpromising material. His only recompense for the attempt was a super-excellent lobster cutlet, which he addressed with more satisfactory results.

Mrs. Oliver North, the American, sat beside Clement Moorlake, the sculptor. This was their first meeting, though they had many friends in common. Mrs. North had, of course,

heard of him very often and had seen several of his statues. She could not help thinking, as she now looked at him, that he was infinitely more interesting than any of his creations. His was the face of a man who has early found that life, lived in its fullness, means suffering. There was nothing, so far, in his conversation or his manner to imply that he had sad or secret memories, yet such was the impression at once produced on the mind of his new acquaintance. There was a certain quality in his beauty, his manner, his general bearing which can only be described as romantic. Women were often at once touched by it, and it sometimes led them to expect developments that would justify their estimate, though these expectations were doomed to remain unrealized.

In thinking of persons who are absent and trying to recall their personality, we are apt to remember vividly some one salient feature. In after days Althea, when conjuring up Moorlake's face, always saw his eyes. They were very remarkable—penetrating yet soft, keen yet kindly, brilliant yet tender. Their color was a dark hazel, which in some lights appeared brown, because of the blackness of the lashes. For the rest Althea thought that had *Romeo* lived to conquer his sorrow, he might, at forty, have been externally just such a man as Clement Moorlake.

Althea herself was barely thirty. She was a woman who, after eight years of a married life that left much of her nature unsatisfied, was reaching out always for a consoling sympathy, which she seldom found, or found only to reject, because the coarseness of man's nature is prone to misinterpret such spiritual yearnings. Such a woman is dangerous—often to others and always to herself.

Moorlake already found her charming. He who created only in colorless stone could nevertheless appreciate the tinted whiteness of arms and shoulders that he would not have disdained to model.

Conversation just then was of the

placid and agreeable kind that promotes digestion. No agitating party questions were ever allowed at the Vincent table. The Vincents did not "go in" for politics, though they had intimate friends on both sides. Vincent was a violent Radical, he always said, yet no one could associate this characterization with his benign expression and slow, lazy utterance.

"Not only are Vincent's dinners irreproachable," a well-known diner-out had once said, "but they always agree with me, because they are accompanied by the sauce of good humor."

In a pause of the general conversation Mrs. Vincent's voice was heard.

"I learned such a good definition of a wife the other day," she said. "Effie Nixon said, in her sharp way: 'I don't want to marry! What is a wife, anyway? Only an upper servant engaged by the lifetime without wages.'"

North laughed a little.

"Are you sure," said he, "that it was not my wife who said that? I believe that's her view."

Moorlake glanced at Althea. Her lips compressed slightly.

"Do you remember," said Banfrey, the actor, eager to divert the conversation, "a pretty little American woman named Escott?" He addressed Mrs. Vincent more particularly.

"Yes," answered that lady. "A gay, pleasant creature. What about her?"

"Since she has returned home her husband is suing a man in New York for alienating her affections. The man has had to mortgage his house in order to pay."

"What a revolting thing!" exclaimed Mrs. North, "to put a money value on a woman's affections."

"Far better," said North, sharply, "to put a bullet into the man."

"My dear Oliver," protested Vincent, lazily; "how drastic!"

"In my opinion that is the only way to deal with such a scoundrel," answered North, quite seriously.

Althea's cheek burned. She turned to Moorlake. "Isn't that an awful

idea," she said, "to guard a woman's faith with a revolver?"

"Unnecessarily stern, perhaps," he said, smiling. "There are pleasanter ways of keeping a wife's love."

Althea looked straight at her husband.

"What if Mrs. Escott *wanted* to have her affections alienated?" she demanded, with more earnestness than the occasion seemed to warrant.

"Then she ought to be shot, too," said North, imperturbably.

Mrs. Mellor looked pained.

"What a horrid subject!" she murmured to Banfrey, without, however, expecting his sympathy. She had a fixed idea that all actors are immoral.

The Vincents regarded Mrs. North with interest.

"Let us have your opinion, dear lady," said Bertram. "It is sure to be worth hearing."

Althea's cheeks were very red, and she held her head very high.

"I think," she said, deliberately, "that the only man who is answerable for alienating a married woman's affections is her own husband."

There was an uncomfortable silence.

"That is a dark saying," observed Vincent, presently, "but I suppose it means something."

"I see!" said Mrs. Banfrey. "It means that you can't pour water into a full jug!"

"A full jug meaning a heart full of love," said Mrs. Vincent. "I understand. Women can love only one man at a time, and the husband has only to see that *he* is that man."

"You have been happy in choosing your women friends," said Banfrey, cynically, "if that's the only kind you know."

"Oh, actors see the seamy side," said Nellie Vincent, lightly. "No one minds what they say."

"I wish Charlie were here!" murmured the bride to herself.

North looked very angry.

"Why did you start all this?" he asked of his wife, with an absence of courtesy which made Moorlake indignant.

"As a warning to husbands!" said Althea, with an attempt at lightness.

North turned to his neighbor with some rather irrelevant remark.

Under cover of the general conversation that now began Althea spoke to Moorlake.

"You understand what I mean, don't you?" she asked, almost appealingly.

"I think I do; and I quite agree with you," he answered.

Just then Mrs. Vincent made a sign to Mrs. Banfrey, and the women left the room.

II

"COME up stairs to the studio," said the hostess. "I want you to see Bertie's picture. I like it amazingly, though perhaps I'm rather prejudiced." She laughed lightly as she stood on the shallow step, waiting for her friends to precede her.

"You know I gave him the subject," said Mrs. North.

"I know you did; it's a good idea, and one that wouldn't have occurred to Bertie. He isn't given to ghostly things."

The studio was a room about thirty feet square, in which Vincent painted, composed, etched, sang, and did a few other things. He considered himself only an amateur at these various pursuits, for he asserted that no man can espouse any one art if he coquette with all the others.

"Don't show the picture till Mr. Vincent comes up," said Mrs. Mellor, with timid sweetness.

"Very well," said Mrs. Vincent, and as she spoke she deftly wheeled the easel round so that the picture was hidden.

"Now, my dear, come and sit by me. I haven't seen you for a blue moon," and she took Althea's hand, leading her to a small sofa.

The other two women, forced into friendly relations by this maneuver, sat down beside a fire of vari-colored driftwood.

The appearance of coffee and li-

queurs put the finishing touch to the sense of well-being which should belong to the after-dinner hour.

"Tell me, Althea," pursued Nellie Vincent, "why so severe on husbands? Has Oliver been alienating your affections?"

"He has been . . . as usual."

"No lucid intervals?"

"Short—very short. I am desperate! If it were not for the child I should leave it all."

"Ah, the child! Children are the rivets in the matrimonial chain. They hold the wretched parents together. I thought you very bitter at dinner. I saw the beloved Moorlake look at you with interest. By the way, did he impress you?"

"Of course. He must impress everyone."

"But not always pleasantly. Some people hate him."

"No doubt—vain women and unattractive men. He would make both feel uncomfortable."

"You know that coarse creature, Winterham? He calls Moorlake all sorts of names. He says he's a prig—looks like 'something sugar-coated made up by the chemist.'"

"Tell him I wish he would give me the address of that chemist!"

"Althea, you alarm me!"

"No, my dear, you need not be afraid. Where have you kept this rare creature all these years, that you produce him only now?"

"He has kept himself in Italy."

"He looks a little Italian, though not so black as some. I hate black men! What is his history?"

"Why do you think he has one?"

"Because he's unmarried. All bachelors have a history."

"And some married men! Yes, we think he has one, but I won't tell you about him; it will make him too interesting."

"Providence has made him that already."

At that moment a lady entered the room, the maid, a little in advance, announcing, "Mrs. Hilyer."

The newcomer was small and slight, with dark, curly hair and deep

blue eyes. She wore over an amber satin gown a long white cloak trimmed with feathers.

"I'm aware that this is without precedent!" she exclaimed—if a remark uttered in such a low, sweet voice could be called an exclamation—"but I'm on my way to a neighbor of yours, and I wanted to remind you of to-morrow. Had you forgotten?"

She addressed Mrs. Vincent, and kissed her on both cheeks as soon as she had finished speaking.

"Bother my neighbor!" said Nellie, cordially. "Take off this delicious, fluffy garment and spend an hour with us. The men will be up in a minute. Clement Moorlake is here."

"Do you think I require that as an inducement?" demanded Mrs. Hilyer, with soft reproachfulness. "I can't stay. My carriage is here."

"Send it away, then. Bertram will take you over to the Bascombes'. It's just across the street."

"Very well. You always seduce me from the path of duty—" allowing the maid to divest her of the cloak. "Tell my man to come back—to the house opposite—at one o'clock."

Then she turned to Althea. "How rude I have been! I did not recognize you at once. I'm rather blind. How are you?"

Althea responded pleasantly. She knew Mrs. Hilyer very little, but thought her interesting. The new arrival then found that she also knew both the ladies by the fire, and went over to speak to them.

"What! a fire in June, Nellie?"

"It looks pretty, and the evenings are cold," said Mrs. Banfrey.

"Yes," hazarded the lovely Mrs. Mellor; "there was a slight frost last night."

These profound observations were interrupted by the entrance of the men.

Clement Moorlake came in first, with his firm, elastic tread, very different from the slouch, stride or waddle of the bulk of mankind. One could not hear his step without divining how near perfection his propor-

tions must be. He spoke to Mrs. Hilyer with his usual calm, gentle manner, but Althea fancied that the lady in amber satin found his greeting cold. She was certainly very pale.

They held a short dialogue.

"Where have you been all these weeks?" asked she.

"Working away in the fog at a statue that wouldn't come right," said the sculptor.

"Not even for you?" she asked, in a low voice.

Moorlake looked annoyed. "It was not a Galatea—something much more obstinate, but not half so dangerous," he said.

Vincent interrupted them with a boisterous welcome.

"They all want to see the picture, Bertie," said his wife. "And then they want a song, that latest one, you know—and then—"

"And then they must go down into the kitchen and see you make that deliriously lovely pudding you invented last week!" laughed Bertram.

"Ah," sighed Mrs. Bertram, "we're a wonderful couple."

As two or three of the company moved toward the easel North came and began talking to Mrs. Hilyer. The fireside group, finding the blaze more picturesque than comfortable, also drifted toward the picture. Moorlake stood near Althea.

"I inspired this picture," she confided to him. "I feel quite anxious to see my godchild."

"I hope it's worthy of such a sponsor!" he replied, with mock solemnity.

Vincent wheeled the picture into a good position. "It is called," he said, "'The Faithful Soul.'"

"Which is the faithful one?" asked Banfrey.

"The poor ghost," returned Vincent.

"Ah, it's easy for a ghost to be faithful," said the actor.

Gladys Mellor looked shocked.

The picture was extremely well done. It represented an avenue of lime trees in which stood a man and

a woman. It was night, but the moonlight fell through the breaks between the boughs and revealed the figures. The girl, a lovely creature dressed in a short-waisted white gown, was hanging on the arm of the man. Every curve of her young body told of love and of complete absorption in her companion. But he, a fine, stalwart fellow, was diverted from her by something that was evidently invisible to her. His startled gaze was directed at a form white as a moonbeam and almost as intangible; the face of the fair wraith was more distinct and the expression of mingled reproach and agony on its features was clearly discernible.

"Bravo, Bertie!" said Moorlake, heartily. "This is good. You ought to send it to the Academy."

"Don't you think there are enough amateurs there already?" queried Vincent, with assumed indifference. He was really immensely pleased by Moorlake's honest praise.

"Isn't it good, Mrs. North?" asked the sculptor.

"Alas, poor ghost!" she sighed, her eyes full of tears.

"What is it?" asked Banfrey. "I think it's ripping, old man. Where did you get the idea?"

"From this dear lady," said Vincent, with a look of brotherly regard at Althea—"and from Adelaide Proctor."

"Ah, yes," said Moorlake, "I remember—"

"In that one moment's anguish
The thousand years have passed."

"Who was the person?" asked Mrs. Hilyer, who, accompanied by North, had come to look at the picture.

"The faithful soul belonged, of course, to a female ghost," said Nellie Vincent.

"What nonsense!" said Vincent. "How can a soul belong to a ghost? You do muddle things so!"

"It's beautiful, Bertie, beautiful!" said North, "but too ethereal for me. I like real things," and he sauntered away.

"Do you think there is no fidelity in man?" asked Moorlake of Althea, as they lingered a moment beside the picture.

"Not often," said Mrs. North.

"Yet I know a man," he said, reflectively, "who has loved one woman for fifteen years."

"Then he is all the nearer to a change," she laughed, with assumed hardness.

He looked into her eyes almost sadly, and saw that she was an unhappy woman.

"How bitter you are!" he said. "And yet nature has done so much for you. . . . I hope we may meet again; I must go on now." He shook hands with her as he spoke.

"Come to see me," she said, with a strange sense of fear that she might lose him altogether.

"I shall be most happy," he said, in a conventional tone, and went to take leave of the Vincents.

"Are you going to the Bascombes'?" asked Mrs. Hilyer.

"No; unfortunately in quite another direction," said Moorlake.

Mrs. Banfrey remarked, a few moments later, as she and Althea put on their cloaks down stairs:

"Nellie is easily deceived. Mrs. Hilyer knew that Moorlake was dining here. That's why she came. She has been in love with him for years. . . ."

In the carriage, as they drove home, Oliver North said to his wife: "Do you know that you have been exceptionally odious to-night—even for you?"

"You don't mind telling me so," said Althea.

"Your remarks about marriage were simply depraved. I wonder a decent woman could make them. They make me wonder if you *are* decent. You grow more reckless every day, and let me tell you that your vulgar habit of making eyes at good-looking men is growing on you. You flirted outrageously with that sculptor fellow."

"No one *could* flirt with Mr. Moorlake," said Althea, indignantly. "You are too vulgar!"

"Not so vulgar as the actions I refer to. No one has the courage to tell you your faults but me."

"You have plenty of courage!" she said, sharply. Then silence fell between them. When they reached home North put the key in the door without a word and allowed his wife to pass in. She went directly up stairs, and without removing her cloak entered the nursery, where her child lay asleep. The nurse was in a bed beside the crib, and slumbered too deeply to be aware of her mistress's presence. Althea bent over the little girl.

"If it were not for you!" she murmured; "oh, baby, if it were not for you!"

Then she went away noiselessly to her own room.

III

ALTHEA had been one of those unlucky girls who are born for love and for nothing else. Her youth was taken up by poetry and dreams. An orphan of small means, she was brought up by an old-fashioned aunt, who did not take much pains with her education. She had fed her mind on visions of love—innocent enough, but enervating and dangerous, because she made the mistake of supposing that love is the whole of life. Instead of filling her days with interesting pursuits, she waited, wondering when the king would come. She tried to fit her ideal to every man she met, and when Oliver North asked her to marry him, he seemed nearer her romantic standard than the others. She required to be loved. Her existence was incomplete without someone on whom to lavish the great devotion of which she was capable. But she made, in the first flush of her hopefulness and enthusiasm, the mistake of marrying a man who began by being somewhat cold and who ended, as we have seen, by becoming something less than civil. North was a person in whose life women were a mere episode, and not a very interesting

one. He had, more than most men, a talent for fidelity, physical and mental. The idea of loving anyone but his lawful wife would have been to him terrible. It is doubtful whether he ever entertained it. But no feminine creature could play a large rôle in his existence. The charms of mountain-climbing, yachting or exploring strange countries appealed to him irresistibly. When he tired for a time of these pursuits he would return home, expecting to find that his wife had been quietly fulfilling her domestic duties with discretion and was ready to receive him with an ardor devoid of reproaches for his long absence. And that is what he did find. For years Althea accepted this lot as the usual portion of wives, hung on Oliver's words as those of an oracle, punctually discharged her duties, and solaced herself with her child and the companionship of a few women friends. Men she liked individually rather than collectively, but she never had a shadow of a flirtation during all those devoted years.

North combined the passions of an explorer with the didactic talent of a schoolmaster. He thought he knew exactly how everyone should think, feel and act, and in his domestic intervals he occupied himself with forming his wife's character. Pretty young women who find that they have power to charm even in their crude state usually resent being formed, but for years Althea submitted to this process with comparative equanimity.

One day there came a change. During one of Oliver's more than ordinarily protracted yachting cruises, which a constitutional aversion to the sea prevented her sharing, it dawned on her that she did very well without Oliver. The novel discovery gave her a shock. On considering it she realized that without him the house was quieter, everything ran more smoothly, and her nerves were certainly under better control. In short, she became once more an individual, not a faint reflection—became herself, not a poor attempt at a copy of someone

whom she could never really resemble.

When a woman once finds the wings of her soul she is forever out of reach of the man who has sought to cage her. Henceforth Althea belonged, in a sense, to herself, though she had not the courage openly to oppose the hundred small tyrannies with which North oppressed her. He had, without deliberate intention, thrown away a heart rich with unquestioning love. Friends who had anxiously watched the slow process of which he was unconscious, pitied while they blamed him, and feared for the future. Yet he thought he loved her, and it is certain that he loved no one else. Indeed, as she cooled, and failed to cower and weep under his frequent disapproval, he grew warmer and less willing to leave her than of old. What she had once resented she would now have prized—freedom and solitude, leave to live her own life, which, if not heroic, was at least innocent.

North had one fault that no woman ever forgives; he was stingy. Though in possession of an income of about £4,000 a year he disputed every item of the household accounts. Once a month, at least, when the hateful tradesmen's books came in, there was an unpleasant scene between the pair, which usually ended for Althea in a nervous attack. Oliver liked keeping open house, but did not enjoy paying for the pleasure. He was also under the impression that women in society require next to no pin money. Althea's financial position was a painful one, because she had only £50 a year of her own, and she could not possibly dress on such a small sum. She had to plead abjectly with her master when she wanted a new gown.

On the morning after the Vincents' dinner party she entered the library knowing that a disagreeable encounter lay before her. North was reading the paper. On his desk lay a note, stamped and addressed. It contained an order for extensive improvements to his yacht, which was being put in commission.

He looked up at Althea.

"What can I do for you?" he asked, with a sort of sarcastic playfulness. "You never come here unless you want something."

Althea repressed the ready repartee on her lips and said, quietly:

"I *do* want something. I have been overhauling my wardrobe with Barnes, and she and I both think I can't get through the season without some new clothes."

"Why must you quote Barnes? The season is nearly over," said North, with a vexed expression on his face.

"The Summer is here, and I can't possibly make those country visits with the things I have."

"Where are your last year's clothes? Given away, I suppose."

"Worn out, most of them."

"Can't you buy more, if it's absolutely necessary?"

"Certainly, if I have the money."

"You have £100 a year. Most women can make themselves look well on that."

"Fifty of that is my own. If you allowed me a hundred I might manage."

She began to be exasperated, and made a struggle to remain calm. There was a painful tension in her face which would have told her husband what she suffered, but he did not look at her.

"What does it matter what you wear?" he asked. "Women spend far too much on their clothes."

"It matters this much: I go now to a second-rate dressmaker, and I can't afford to do even that. If you refuse to give me a decent allowance I must refuse to go into the world any more."

"What a stagey expression! 'Into the world!' It sounds like a woman in a cheap novel."

She still controlled herself.

"Oliver," she said, in a hard, low voice, "why do you grudge me everything I need? I am not indifferent to your comfort. If our positions were reversed, and I had your income, you would not have to come to me to beg when you needed things. I shouldn't

wait for that. I should give you what you wanted."

"I have no wish to deprive you of what you need. *Need* and *want* are two very different things. You have a charming house, a very good turn-out and——"

"A generous husband!" she interrupted, her scorn breaking all bounds. "I have my answer. You refuse me—*refuse* me—you, with your thousands a year—a few pounds for the necessities of life! Oliver, has it ever occurred to you that I hate my life? that I long to be free?"

She flushed all over as she spoke, alarmed at her own bluntness.

Her husband looked at her.

"You hate your life because you do nothing with it. You starve your brain. You should have pursuits and interests, as I have. And as to freedom, what woman has more? I leave you alone for six months out of the twelve. Not many men have so much confidence in their wives."

"You are a strange mixture!" she retorted, "with your 'absolute confidence' when you are away, and your constant suspicion when you are at home! But there is no use in talking to you about all this. Do you refuse me the money?"

"I can't very well let you have any now," he answered. "The *Jessamine* needs a lot done to her——"

"Ah, my rival!" cried Althea, with a short laugh. "I might have known you would deny me everything sooner than grudge her a coat of paint."

"Many wives would be happy to have only an inanimate rival!" said he. "I am going away soon, and you'll be rather quiet, I suppose, and won't want many clothes."

Without another word Althea left the room. Interviews of this sort always left her with a half-stunned feeling. She could not understand why her life must be bound up with this man's—why her youth and her prettiness must be wasted in such uncongenial companionship. As she sat brooding in her morning-room, her unpaid bills spread out before her, suddenly an image rose before

her mind. The eyes of Clement Moorlake seemed to look down on her troubled soul—to penetrate into her weary heart—and their phantasmal glance brought quiet to her being.

"There are kind and gentle men in the world, after all!" she thought. "Thank God for them!"

IV

SHE felt the imperative need of getting away to some place where she could breathe fresh air and see grass and flowers. Still in a sort of blind rage, she went to the nearest underground railway station and took a ticket for Kew. How often she had sat in cab, train, carriage or omnibus, with her heart full of bitterness, her soul in revolt! She wearied herself with thought; her lips framed, without uttering, long colloquies between her husband and herself—imaginary scenes in which at last she triumphed and convinced him of his meanness. The unhappy woman had been born with a strong sense of the dramatic—a gift that adds another pang to an unhappy lot. All her life appeared to her in scenes, acts, situations; and of each she felt the force and poignancy, knowing meanwhile that she lacked the self-control necessary to enact a consistent rôle. She lacked the balance to adhere to a certain line of conduct, or she might have mastered her tyrant. She was canine—not feline, and there lay her failure. The dog watches his master with fear or affection—or both—written in his eyes; the cat pursues her sinuous way with complete indifference. The dog looks at you *with* his eyes—the consciousness of the cat sits behind hers, and peeps *through* them, so that none can divine her meaning. When she confers a favor she makes the recipient feel proud. As for the dog, one knows *he* will be pleased if thrown a kind word, and there is rather a contempt for his ready demonstration of affection.

The woman who lays bare her soul

to a man has lost her hold on him. Her very honesty is her ruin.

Through the purgatory of the underground railway Althea reached the paradise of Kew Gardens. They were in full beauty with their masses of gorgeous rhododendron, the daisied turf, like green embroidered velvet, and the birds trilling, warbling, whistling and chirping in the heavenly blue air of June.

The human race began in a garden—would that it had stayed there!

The turmoil in the soul of the woman abated in the calm of the place.

For hours Althea sat under the great trees or slowly paced the fragrant ways. The one great safeguard of ardent, headlong natures is a latent power to right themselves. The pendulum swings lightly back again. By three o'clock Mrs. North began to realize that life was not quite without charm, and that she was prosaically hungry. Almost laughing at this assertion of her physical being, she made her way toward the teahouse. And as she turned a leafy corner, she came full on Clement Moorlake. Life is sadly unlike the drama in that the time, the place and the man are generally wide apart. To-day, of all the persons on earth whom she might have met, Althea wished most to see the sculptor. Yet for a moment she shrank from the encounter. Only for a moment; Moorlake looked like the high priest of conventionality. Althea's exuberant fancy quailed before his calm greeting.

"Is this one of your favorite haunts, Mrs. North?" he asked. "I come here often when London seems to press too heavily."

"I love it," said Althea. "I break away sometimes and sit for an hour under the trees. Why is it that life under the trees is so easy?"

In her words there was an underlying pathos, an unconscious claim for sympathy, that did not escape Moorlake's keen perceptions.

"Because," he said, looking down at her with a kindly light in his eyes, "we have nothing to do but rest

and gather strength there. But you would not like life always to be made up of sheltering boughs and soft turf, would you? You are too active, too intelligent, to like inglorious ease."

"How do you know?" she asked. "You have seen me only once."

"That is enough to enable me to at least guess at your character, isn't it? A sculptor becomes a bit of a physiognomist—but how personal I am getting!" he went on. "Forgive me!"

"I think nothing is interesting unless it is personal," admitted Althea, more gaily. Her color had come back and her tread was once more elastic.

"Interesting—yes," said her companion, reflectively. "But I have rather a horror of personalities. One's own sorrows are enough, without knowing the griefs of others."

"What a selfish sentiment! Do you build a high wall about yourself?"

"With a door in it!" he said, smiling; "and I have been weak enough sometimes to lend the key."

As he looked at her his somewhat sad, stern face relaxed, and again she saw the warm, friendly light in the eyes which belied the coldness of his usual manner.

"Are there many keys?" she asked, playfully.

"Not out of my keeping," he answered. "I have learned to neither borrow nor lend—now."

"I know those resolutions! One says, 'This is the last time,' and one says it every time."

"But some time must really be the last!"

"Yes; but the charm is, one never knows that that particular time is the last! . . . I wish I could build a wall! I have only a hedge full of gaps—not even a thorn or two!"

"Only flowers on the top?"

Both laughed, and then were silent, wondering whether they had known each other ten minutes or half a lifetime.

"I once read in a theosophical book," resumed Althea, "that one

must imagine one's self enclosed in a sort of shell, like a horse chestnut, and then the sorrows of the world will glide off, not stay to harass and torment. Isn't it a funny idea?"

"Not a pleasant one, certainly. Here we are at the tea place. Are you hungry?" inquired Moorlake, abruptly.

"Well—yes—I am," admitted Althea. "It seems too gross a confession to make in such a place, on such a day, but I've had no luncheon."

"My dear lady! what a tragedy! Instead of metaphysics we should be having tea—or shall it be 'cold luncheon, two to six?'" asked Moorlake, glancing at the placard above them.

"Oh, tea, by all means—buns, cresses, jam—all sorts of lovely things!" cried Althea, softly, with a child's pleasure.

The place was deserted, the lunchers having departed and the tea drinkers not having yet arrived. They chose a table outside the building, and ordered tea.

Althea's day of misery had suddenly turned into an exquisitely interesting occasion, and fate having contrived a tête-à-tête with the most interesting man of her acquaintance, she submitted without a murmur.

"I was most interested last night," said Moorlake, as they settled themselves comfortably opposite each other at the little table, "in the conversation about constancy."

"Mrs. Mellor was shocked, I think," said Althea. "Isn't she lovely?"

"As lovely as waxwork—and as attractive."

"I thought beauty was always attractive."

"Yes, for a moment—but think of a life spent with such a woman!"

"I have always supposed that men do not require brains in the women they love."

"Some men may not, and if they don't they don't deserve them. But you can't seriously think that pink-and-white inanity could satisfy a man with any mind? Charm is the enduring quality. I know women of fifty who will never be old, because they

have charm. That nameless something holds a man's interest longer than anything else."

His remarkable eyes were fixed dreamily on the gray-green distance. Althea looked at him and wondered more than ever what the story of his life was. His face had nothing middle-aged in its lines, though the thick, waving hair above it was shot with a few gray threads.

"I wish," said Althea, averting her gaze as his eyes traveled back to her, "I wish I could for one hour be a man, in order to discover your standpoint. We women are so helpless—so in the dark! We have no freedom in which to gain experience. We never learn to know you well. There seems to be no friendship possible between us. It is all passionate love—or utter indifference. I wish I could know just once what you really are; what standards you have—what beliefs—what convictions."

"There are as many standards as there are men," said Moorlake.

"But there are hard-and-fast rules for you as for us. You must not cheat at cards, for instance. You must not 'kiss and tell.' I always think life must be easy to men, because the world expects so little from them."

"Most decent men have a few virtues besides the negative one of not being blackguards," laughed Moorlake. "Don't you think we have our struggles?—that we mark out a line of conduct for ourselves, and try with tears and prayers, perhaps, to keep to it? I think men and women are wonderfully alike, only you are more complex."

"Have you ever studied palmistry?" asked Althea. "Do you notice how complicated a woman's hand is, compared with a man's? Our hands are full of little, nervous, niggling, criss-cross lines, and yours have plain, deep-cut marks, either good or bad."

"Those little marks mean flirtation," said Moorlake, laughing. "Let me see yours."

"I have a chain of them—but they aren't true," said Althea, coloring

like a girl and hiding her hand under the table.

"Even a woman's hands can lie, then," said Moorlake, still regarding her with an amused smile. "Her lips are not false enough! What little hands you American women have!"

"All wrong from a sculptor's point of view, of course. I feel that I must admit—no—do I dare?"

She paused and looked at him sidelong, with a sort of childlike glance that charmed him.

"Confess?" said he; "certainly. I can endure a great deal."

"Well—I don't like statues," she admitted, and colored brightly.

"I'm very glad!" said he, placidly. "That saves a lot of trouble. You can't think how tiresome people are who think they care, and in point of fact know nothing whatever about art. They torment me with ignorant criticisms until my politeness gives way."

"That I can't imagine," said Althea. "You are *fearfully* polite."

Moorlake laughed.

"Do you find that fault with the men of this generation? When I was young one didn't dare to be rude."

"That, I suppose, was a long time ago."

"So long that you seem to me a mere child."

Althea shook her head, and said, half-sadly, "I shall never be grown up—and eternal youth of the soul doesn't save one's poor face from wrinkles. It is terrible to be a middle-aged baby!"

There was now no further pretext for remaining at the table, so the waiter was paid, and they rose to go away.

The day was growing more enchanting as it declined. The level beams of light played a thousand lovely tricks with flowers and sward. The birds' hearts gushed out in melody. London and its smoke seemed far away. Sordid care and bitter disappointment have no place in Kew Gardens.

A calm settled on Althea's heart—a calm with a strange, pleasant flut-

tering underneath. She seemed to see how happy life might have been.

She and Moorlake went back to town by underground railway; and for once the sulphurous air seemed sweet and bracing. She reached home in a mood of quiet happiness, which not even North's continued captiousness could mar.

But there is one drawback to spending an hour or two with a very sympathetic and delightful person—one wants immediately to spend many more!

And the opportunity for this did not at once recur.

V

CONCEIVE a young and pretty woman alternately bullied and neglected, and you will understand that she may some day begin to cry for the moon. It is generally that moon which is so brilliant and attractive and far away, called Love.

We call to it to come down, and it stays above; we rake for it in the stagnant water of a pond, as did the "Three Sillies" in the fairy tale, and we succeed only in stirring up the mud. Love, that protean phantasm, is no doubt a useful thing to the poet and the writer of songs; but the search after it is a sad and unremunerative occupation. Althea had not yet begun it; but she was frequently troubled by a strong desire to see Clement Moorlake again.

Rigid moralists always say, in speaking of a poor, disappointed, mismated woman and the needs of her heart: "Are not her children enough for her?" As well direct a man to the town pump to allay a craving for champagne. What woman of heart and imagination does not crave the thousand touches of cherishing tenderness which a man who loves her bestows on her life? Can she discuss the problem of her soul with her baby? Can she spend all her evenings in hearing her children's artless prayers? Can even the education of her family become so intensely enthralling that she has

neither time nor inclination to listen to Love's voice? A human woman must and will love somebody. When it isn't the right man—which it seldom is—it will be the wrong one; and she always thinks that the wrong one *is* the right one, or would have been if she had had half a chance.

Oliver North departed, as usual, at a few hours' notice, on a perfectly rational and respectable yachting cruise, in company with several estimable male friends. The law could pick no flaw in his behavior; the divorce court could not pronounce on it. Meanwhile his bored and starved wife was left at home on short commons, both temporal and spiritual.

"You are a wonderfully good woman," said Nellie Vincent one day when she and Althea were driving together. "I wonder why you've kept straight so long."

Althea opened her eyes.

"Why, how could I be anything else? I've never been tempted," she said.

"Then," said Nellie, "the men are better than I thought."

"No one would dare to make love to me," added Althea, as an afterthought. "Besides, women don't want to be wicked. (They only want to be loved.)"

"Ah, yes, that's so simple, isn't it?" said Nellie, with a sort of grim gaiety. "What a pity the men won't understand!" Then, after a pause, "Moorlake is going to call on you."

"Really? How nice!" said Althea. "I think he is most interesting."

"A good many have thought so. Don't, my dear, *don't* love him. It won't repay you."

"I can't imagine having the impertinence to love him. I should *revere* him."

It was about a week after this that the sculptor appeared in Pont street. Althea had thought, after their semi-intimate tea at Kew, that she should certainly see him very soon. But she didn't know Moorlake. He was vagueness itself when it came to

making calls or performing any other social duties. Even his friendships had vast lapses, during which he was seen by no one but his old mother, with whom he lived.

When he entered the drawing-room Althea was listlessly reading a small volume of verses which had lately appeared. It was a fine afternoon, but she had not felt like rousing herself to go out. She was in the mood that comes to some women during the London season when every hour is not filled with pleasant engagements. They feel that they ought to be doing something brilliant and fascinating every day, and when they are not they lose interest in life.

Moorlake's entrance was a welcome interruption. It seemed all at once that she had a hundred things to say to him; and yet when they were seated near each other, with at least half an hour before them, she began to experience a sense of vacancy.

He began with the usual conventionalities—the weather, inquiries after Oliver North, and uninteresting remarks on the subjects of the day. It did not escape him that there was a certain dryness in her replies when he mentioned her husband, and he at once let the subject drop. She who was so fluent with other men was perturbed and unnatural in his presence. She wanted to appear well—to win his regard, and she found herself dull and almost speechless. His very look to-day was irritatingly impersonal. Only life in the abstract seemed capable of touching him. The longer they sat thus the tenser became the strain. The appearance of tea made a happy diversion.

Presently Moorlake said: "What were you reading when I came in? Something new?"

"A curious little booklet called 'Poems of a Pessimist.' There appears to be much pessimism in it and little poetry," said Althea.

"Won't you read a little? I fancy that you must read well," he observed.

"Here is a bit—very pathetic, though not inspired at all," said she,

turning over the leaves. "It is called 'Woman's Lot.' That is generally the preface to a moan, isn't it? It says:

"For what are women made?
To sit and wait—and wait—and try to
hope;
To take with thankfulness the crumbs of
life;
To press back tears that else would dim
the sight;
To choke down sobs that else would rend
the throat;
To bear the sorrows that are laid on
them.
Sometimes by hands that should be their
support.
For this are women made.

"And what is their reward?
A year or two of love—sweet, but soon
cold;
A gleam or two of sun, soon hid by
clouds;
A fervent kiss—a hand clasp—an em-
brace—
A kind word, and the dear-bought privi-
lege
Of bearing pains and sorrows not their
own—
The rest is vain regret.

"Isn't that dreadful?" she asked, faltering a little over the last line.

"Dreadful!" assented Moorlake; "and written, of course, by a woman."

"Of course. I wonder what made her so bitter and sad? A man, I suppose."

"It is not always like that. Men become pessimists, too, you know, through women."

"I'm so glad!" Althea almost smiled. "I wish I could meet one."

"One sits before you," said Moorlake. He also was smiling slightly, and a little color had risen in his pale face.

"*You?* Impossible! You are too strong and wise and well balanced to let such a poor, inadequate thing as a woman change your life."

"Who told you I was all those nice things?"

"Several people—but I knew it before."

"Do you know, Mrs. North," said Moorlake, after a slight pause full of interest for both, "you have a very unwholesome effect on me? You positively make me morbid, and you cause me to talk about myself. That will never do. You mustn't look over my wall, you know!"

"I can't!" she protested. "I can't see a thing. It's much too high and has spikes on top. But you are rather unkind to go about like a fascinating novel with the pages uncut."

"Do you prefer men who make their moan to every new acquaintance?" he asked.

She shrank a little and changed color.

"Forgive me," she said, quietly. "I was forgetting that we are strangers."

Most men would have found this an opportunity for a pretty speech. Moorlake only observed: "Not quite strangers, I hope." Then he added: "What is the reason there is so much unhappiness among women, especially of late years? Is it because you are idle and fanciful?—or what is it?"

"Because we are idealists, and we *won't* accept the world as it is; and the world to most women means—some man."

"I think that diagnosis is too flattering to us, don't you? There are many women just now who appear to be quite independent of us."

"Who appear so; but in reality you will find, if you look, that the eternal masculine is at the bottom of all their restless strivings. They work to forget, most of them. I suppose work dulls the pain of one's heart, but it can't cure it. It's only a temporary anæsthetic. Do you suppose if I am unhappy and scrub a floor, or write a novel, as the case may be, that when my floor is clean or my novel written I won't be just as unhappy as I was before?"

"Possibly," said Moorlake. "Go on and tell me more. You interest me enormously."

"The more I see of life the less I understand it," Althea continued, her eyes and cheeks burning. She was

at that moment compellingly attractive. "It seems to me as if Providence had put us all down on this earth like a mass of blind kittens. We crawl and mew, and scratch and knock into one another, and have no idea why we're here or where we're going. As soon as one kitten gets to love another it loses it; we have scarcely got our eyes open when we're snatched away to some other strange place, before we have a chance to do more than to wonder what it's all about."

Moorlake leaned forward and looked at her intently. Her eyes shone with tears.

"My dear lady!" he said, in a deep, tender voice, "is that really your idea of life?"

"Sometimes—not always. It is to-day." She tried to smile, and failing, got up and stood at the window, with her back to him. He came and stood near her—very near, though there was no actual contact. His proximity thrilled her from head to foot.

"Dear Mrs. North," he said, in a low voice, "I am years older than you are, and therefore perhaps a little wiser. Believe me, you are not a blind kitten! Life is full of sunshine for you if you will look for it. We all go through a trying period in which we feel that we are failures. No one worth his salt escapes that phase. But by-and-bye we recognize what our work in the world is to be. We cease to expect great happiness, but we find—resignation."

Althea turned her face toward him.

"Have you found it?" she asked.

"I think so," he said, gravely.

"And with it—indifference," she said.

"I hope so—but I am not sure."

There was a curious spark in his eyes as he spoke.

"Friendship is left for all of us," Althea cried, impulsively, almost with pleading in her voice. "Be my friend! Help me! I do so need a friend! I felt at once that I could trust you. Be my friend!"

"I can't," he said, almost roughly.

"You can't trust me. You mustn't—

"I don't trust myself!" He flushed scarlet.

"Oh, you don't understand me!" she exclaimed. "You ought to—you're not like other men. I *mean* what I say. I have dreamed for years of such a friendship, which should be a constant consolation for all that one suffers. One gets bruised and battered on the sharp corners of life, and the regard, the interest of a good man would be a healing balm."

She stood and looked at him with eyes full of a pure pleading. He did not misunderstand her. He took her hand very gently and led her back to her seat. Then he sat down beside her.

"My dear Mrs. North," he said, gravely, "it is impossible. There is no such friendship."

"There is!" she persisted. "I say there is! There shall be. I will *make* it true."

"What you call friendship has another name," he said.

"Won't you believe me that I didn't mean that?" she begged.

"I am quite certain you did not," said Moorlake. "But I *know*, and you don't. It might be possible for you, but not for a man. We are not angels."

"Don't tell me that. I *know* there is a middle course."

"Not for us men. Our motto is, 'All or nothing.'"

They had both regained their self-command.

"I shall always persist," said Althea, "that I am right."

Moorlake rose to go.

"You may try the 'middle course' in thirty years—but not now, please, if you value our peace of mind."

"Please believe, Mr. Moorlake," said Althea, as she shook hands with him, "that I am not always hysterical."

A smile was his only answer.

As he walked away he thought: "A most unhappy woman. There is only one thing that could make her more unhappy, and that shall never come to her through me."

The next day Oliver North unex-

pectedly returned and carried his family off to America.

Unkind circumstances—or a merciful Providence—kept Moorlake and Althea apart for four months.

VI

FOR several years Mrs. Hilyer had been a widow. She had a daughter of fifteen, though she herself looked marvelously young without the aid of art. The girl was in France, at a school where accomplishments were plentiful though food was scanty. Mrs. Hilyer very much disliked having a daughter of fifteen in evidence; besides, it was so bad for the child to meet men, and Mrs. Hilyer's house was full of them of an afternoon.

The deceased Hilyer had been an easy-going, genial person in the City—the sort of man who slaps a friend on the back with one hand to conceal the fact that the other is in the friend's pocket. Clarice had been a great help to him. She attracted almost everybody who knew her; the occasional dissentient voices were so few and faint that the general pæan of praise drowned them. Clarice got a very amusing, pleasant circle about her. She had a great many men friends, and a number of women liked and admired her. There was one man particularly—George Watson—who had been for years very much in evidence. People said the friendship was extremely pretty and manifestly innocent, because they used to kiss each other good-night in public. When Hilyer died somebody said, "Now she'll marry Watson." But a cynic replied: "Men don't marry widows they've kissed as wives."

Certainly the marriage did not come off. Clarice Hilyer continued to live in a small house in Cheyne Walk, and appeared to enjoy life as much as ever. During her varied experience in matters of the heart she had the rare good sense to avoid concentration. The woman that concentrates suffers. She only tires the

man she loves, for nothing bores a man so much as excessive affection. She may give her body to be burned to please him, but it will only annoy him. The Indian widows used to wait for this sacrifice till their lords were past being bored by it.

Clarice could keep a leash of admirers well in hand. Her nature was complex and sinuous; compared to Althea's it was what Bradshaw is to an A B C—when you were once started you couldn't tell when or where you would arrive.

During a Winter spent in Rome Clarice became acquainted with Moorlake.

Henceforth other men had few attractions for her. She tried every resource at her command to gain his love; she never left anything to chance, but marked out her plan of life as women draw a pattern in a tea cloth, afterward following it out with embroidery silk. She knew what she wanted very distinctly, and when her silk grew knotted or broke she picked it out or cut it off and began again. She never had those fatal moments of frankness which make a woman blurt out things in five minutes that spoil the work of years. She studied Moorlake as a musician studies a score, a painter a model; and the more she studied the more she found that the moon she was crying for was only a burnt-out crater. It took all her exquisite self-control to keep back the mad bitterness of the discovery. The sculptor was as hard as his marble; and his beautiful, almost stately, courtesy to all women only added a sting to the despair of the one that loved him.

For fifteen years Moorlake had loved the memory of one woman. What had been the history—whether she were alive or dead—no one knew, and no one dared ask him. In his early days he had been all made up of sentiment and passion. Some cruel disappointment dried up the one and left little of the other. He avoided all intimate relations with women. He was accustomed to say that society loses half its charm when people

confide their troubles to one another. Before this reserve of character, this killing indifference, all Clarice's weapons fell powerless. Moorlake had one very charming quality, however: he always knew how to save a woman's self-respect. If any feminine admirer became indiscreetly pressing in her attentions, by a happy knack he managed to make it appear that in reality it was he who had taken the initiative; whereas he spent a great part of his life in repelling such attacks.

When Clarice Hilyer left Rome she lost sight of him. Once she wrote to him, and received a prompt reply—a perfect model of a friendly letter, cool, pleasant, non-committal. There their intercourse ended. On the night when they met at the Vincents' house Clarice had come because she accidentally heard that he was dining there. It was not till Winter that she saw him again. They met at a Sunday luncheon, and found themselves next each other at table.

Clarice opened fire by saying: "I want so much to see your studio. How does it compare with the Roman one?"

"Very much as the English climate compares with the Italian," Moorlake replied, smiling, and ignoring the first part of her sentence.

"Ah, one misses the sun," she assented. "Do you think you are going to like Chelsea?"

"I can hardly tell yet—but inasmuch as I am a near neighbor of yours—" another smile finished the sentence.

Clarice smiled also. She was too clever ever to look sentimental.

"Neighbors are proverbially strangers," she said. "Perhaps we shall meet occasionally on the Embankment."

"It is a fine place for constitutionals. I think I shall become fond of the river, even when it is cold and gray, as it is now."

"Your mother is with you?"

"Yes."

During the brief pause that ensued the man on the other side of Mrs. Hilyer spoke to her.

It was not till some minutes later that she turned swiftly and said, in an undertone: "I cannot help thinking that we ought to be friends. We have both outlived our illusions, and we are both—lonely."

Her voice shook a little.

"I thought loneliness was one of the few things not to be had in London," said Moorlake. "As for you, you are surrounded all day by an admiring throng, and have no time to be alone."

"There is a loneliness of the heart, I should say, if people hadn't ceased to plead guilty of having such things as hearts. You boast of being quite immune, I believe."

"Don't accuse me of anything so ill-bred as boasting! But I always think that hearts are best kept in the background, don't you?"

"Or dispensed with altogether. Have you seen Mrs. Oliver North since her return?"

His companion's abruptness confused Moorlake, as perhaps it was intended to do.

He hesitated for a moment, feeling suddenly guilty, he didn't know why, and then said, simply, "No; have you?"

"No, but I hear they are very unhappy."

Here again a diversion occurred, and the subject was not renewed. But the one allusion had the effect of sending Moorlake to Pont street that afternoon.

He was in his mind so strenuously opposed to cultivating any intimacy with Althea that it was almost with a sense of surprise he found himself in her drawing-room.

A number of persons had been lunching with the Norths, but the last one had gone, and Oliver was out.

As Moorlake entered he received a distinct impression of the lassitude and dejection of Mrs. North's bearing—the worn, tired look on her face. In moments of animation the lines were smoothed away; but now that she fancied herself alone they were very apparent.

At sight of Moorlake she seemed

almost agitated. A sudden gleam of joy swept over her face. He did not know—what was indeed the case—that for four months she had craved a sight of him.

The springs of sympathy surged up within him, and there was real feeling in his tone as he took her hand and asked her how she was.

"Oh, I'm unspeakably glad to get home!" she said, smiling brightly.

"And yet," he said, sitting beside her on the long sofa before the wood fire—"and yet you have come from what was your home."

"Yes—in a way, but not in any true sense. I never felt contented there. England was somewhere in my blood calling to me; and when I came here I at once recognized its claim on me."

"That is very pleasant for us to hear!" said Moorlake. "How did New York strike you after your absence?"

"As a place that is not over-comfortable for the rich and quite impossible for the poor. One must be either a millionaire or a pauper to live there. What strikes me as remarkable whenever I go back is the number of well-dressed women. Hardly anyone looks dowdy. And yet one knows that they are not all rich."

"American women spend a great deal on their clothes, I have always been told," observed Moorlake.

"Yes, when they have the money;—and sometimes, I fancy, when they haven't," replied Althea. "You can't conceive how grotesque it is to see women in beautiful gowns hanging on to a strap in an electric tram car—liable to be sent flying at any moment into the laps of strange men who do not get up to give them a seat! The air is full of clashing of bells, snorting of trains overhead, clattering of hoofs, rolling of wheels! It is a pandemonium, which grows worse every year."

"And how did your husband get on there? Does he like it?" asked Moorlake.

"Not particularly; we weren't there

long, only in the Autumn, a few weeks ago. In August Oliver was yachting; he is always yachting when he is not mountain-climbing, you know."

"And you—I hope you amused yourself. I suppose you have a great many friends."

"Yes—but one does so drop out in the course of a year or two! Everything changes. New people are always cropping up and taking the old houses one used to know."

"It is becoming so here, too."

"But London is in a measure conservative. One sees the same butlers at the same houses year after year. The servant question in America has got beyond anything you can imagine."

"And on the whole you are glad to be here?"

"Oh, inexpressibly glad."

She looked as if she were very sincere.

"What plans has your husband made? Is he going to run away again soon?" asked Moorlake.

"Not yet, I think," she answered. "We shall stay at home now for a time."

"Have you any special projects for the Winter?" asked Moorlake. "I mean, have you a hobby?"

"No," said Althea; "I wish I had! A middle age without hobbies is worse than 'old age without cards,' which has been spoken of as such a terrible thing."

"Middle age is nothing to you, Mrs. North," replied Moorlake, "and need be nothing for at least fifteen years to come."

"I am over thirty," said Althea, smiling, "and I should be sorry to think I was only half through my pilgrimage."

Moorlake raised his hand as one playfully threatens a child.

"Again the mournful note! I thought we were to have no more 'blind kittens!'" he said, with a humorous light in his eyes.

"Oh, haven't you forgotten the blind kitten yet?" asked she. "I've been one for months, and sometimes a deaf and dumb one—which is hard

to believe of a woman, I know—but it's true."

Her face wore a look half-sad, half-merry, which made her charming. Moorlake's heart relented. Why must he always assume the highly didactic pose in her presence? He bent toward her slightly and let his eyes, in all their expressive beauty, rest on hers.

"Do you know," he said, "there are two reasons why I must never be an intimate friend of yours; can you guess them?"

Althea felt a quite irrational excitement pulsing through her veins. She withdrew her eyes and said, half-nervously: "I can't guess. Tell me."

"One is," said the sculptor, "that I am so cynical and morbid that I should only make you more low-spirited, and the other—well, I should want more than friendship has to offer."

As soon as he had uttered these words he cursed his recklessness. Their effect on Althea was intense. A wave of color swept over her face, and was succeeded by a pathetic pallor. Her bosom heaved. What was there to answer? At such moments an impulsive woman who loves must make a superhuman effort at self-control, or break down and betray herself.

Which course Althea was about to take remained a mystery, for at the very moment that she was trying to frame a reply, Oliver North entered.

He seemed in a good humor, and greeted Moorlake warmly.

"Are you dining out to-night?" he asked, presently.

Moorlake replied that he was not.

"Come to us at eight, if you'll excuse such an informal invitation," said North. "I know you are hard to catch. Bertie Vincent and his wife are coming. You will second the invitation, won't you, Althea?" turning to his wife. She was feverishly flushed, but Oliver's careless eye did not observe the fact.

"Oh, yes, of course. I should like it immensely," she said at once. Her eyes encountered Moorlake's.

"May I really?" he asked, almost with eagerness.

"Certainly," she said, smiling. "Do come."

"Many thanks," he answered, recovering his conventional tone, which seldom deserted him. Then, rising, "I have another call to make," he added, "and must get back to Chelsea to dress, and also to tell my mother that I'm dining out."

He shook hands with the Norths, and Oliver accompanied him down stairs, talking agreeably all the way.

Althea's mind was in a tumult as she dressed for dinner. Cold-blooded, reasonable women may consider as preposterous the idea of a woman falling in love on short acquaintance and without great encouragement. But these virtuous critics must make large allowance for temperament and circumstances. Althea's unhappiness was not merely passive. Her husband's presence acted like a moral blister. A rankling sense of wrong and injustice inflicted on her during a term of years incensed her constantly against him. She had no illusions left in regard to him. She knew that she never could be even comfortable or peaceful with him again. From the very beginning, from her first glimpse of Clement Moorlake, he had taken hold of her imagination. There was a great void in her life waiting to be filled, and to her it seemed that he, of all men, could best fill it. The words that he had allowed to escape his disciplined lips to-day set her very soul on fire. She did not realize—as many naturally pure women do not—what is involved in a great passion—that no matter how large the spiritual element in it may be, there is the insistent clamoring of the earthly nature which will always make itself heard.

To her Moorlake was a hero of romance—perfect, without insipidity. She saw only the first steps of the path on which she had set her feet, and they seemed to lead upward. Women can go on much longer than men ignoring the bare facts of passion, or they can more easily wreath them about with the garlands of sen-

timent. When the flowers wither and fall off they are sorry, startled, and even surprised.

At the same time that Althea was standing in the glare of electric light, mechanically preparing for her next meeting with Moorlake, he was steeped in a poignant sense of what he had done. The habit of reticence, which he had painfully cultivated now for many years, had suddenly failed him. He could not help knowing from experience—though neither a cad nor a coxcomb—that his personality had extraordinary power over women. Being that rare animal, an honorable and conscientious man, he had tried not to influence them in the slightest degree. He was liberally endowed with every quality that goes to make a successful flirt; but his conscience, no less than his distaste for such conquests, stood in the way of his being one. It is astonishing how many men, who are otherwise gentlemen, do not hesitate to make love to their neighbors' wives, and having done so fall to a lower depth of dishonor—that of failing to abide by the result.

If there was one thing Clement abhorred more than another it was the slightest shade of duplicity in a man's relations with women. He could understand—being a man, not an angel—that there might be circumstances under which you might have the misfortune to love your neighbor's wife. But if you did, and should in any way compromise the lady, it was inconceivable that you should not stand by her before the world. His opinion was that a man ought to consider long and carefully before entering on an *affaire* with a woman; but that, having once decided to enter, he could not honorably draw back.

To be sure, the few words that had escaped him to-day would have meant to some women nothing at all. But he knew that Althea was different; he could see that she waited thirstily for every sign of friendship and affection—that she would treasure every utterance of his like an evangel.

It was this knowledge that made

him feel deeply responsible. Naturally enough, he was not absolutely invulnerable. Though he always told himself that the best part of his nature was dead, there was still left much that was emotional. No man can be constantly appealed to by a charming, devoted woman without being in danger of responding to her; and with a kind, chivalrous man there is always the subtle temptation to make the woman happy with such love as he still has to offer, rather than to mortify her by a repulse, no matter how gentle.

Moorlake was shocked to find that he could not at once adjust his social armor. The "horse chestnut shell" of reserve, laughingly alluded to by Althea in a former conversation, would not fit to-night. "After all, what a bother life is!" he thought. "Men and women are natural enemies; where the sex question once enters into anything, all peace and pleasure are at an end."

He scarcely knew the state of his own mind as he rolled along in a humble brown 'bus to Pont street. When he saw Althea his trouble deepened. Her eyes said, "What next?" There was feverish joy in them—intense expectancy. Fortunately, the Vincents and North were in the room; his conventional manner—"priggish," Nellie Vincent called it—soon returned to him.

Althea was in the midst of a tempest, moral and physical, which rendered her quite incapable of judging what impression she was producing. She saw Nellie regarding her with unusual interest. She was afraid to look at Clement, who sat beside her, and she ostentatiously talked with Bertie Vincent on the other side. She felt guilty. Though so little had happened—nothing, in fact—the world seemed changed. She was so absurdly ignorant of men that she fancied a stray, careless phrase from the man she loved was going to alter the universe.

She had had no experience of the creatures who are all flames and darts to-day and all indifference and con-

tempt to-morrow. Clement was a good man; but the good and the bad are singularly alike when it comes to dealings with their natural dupes. They both make love and are both soon sorry; only the good ones pity the women, while the bad ones are sorry only for themselves.

Oliver North was a very charming host when nothing had happened to cross him. He was far from being deficient in brains, and this evening he was unusually entertaining. He liked the Vincents sincerely, and seemed to have forgotten that he was ever potentially jealous of Moorlake. Conversation flowed smoothly on.

Moorlake remarked that Althea was not at ease in the presence of her husband. He guessed that North had a way of taking her to task, when they were left alone, for everything she had said. Such a practice soon freezes the most spontaneous woman. There was at times a cutting tone in North's voice when he addressed his wife, a sort of sardonic humor in his allusions to her, which quite explained her want of ease. Between her wish to please Clement and her fear of offending Oliver, Althea's ordeal was a trying one. North was the kind of man who could not let even a culinary failure go unnoticed. He would pause in the midst of a story of mountain-climbing—one of his hobbies—to observe that the bread sauce was like a poultice. This evening he fell foul of the salad dressing.

Althea pressed her hands together in a sort of small nervous panic.

"I'm so sorry!" she said; "I ought to have made it myself."

"My wife," said North, addressing the company in general, "believes in doing nothing herself which she can get done for her. Hence this excess of vinegar."

"I thought the salad particularly nice," said Bertie.

"That's right!—flatter Althea. She thrives on flattery. You see, only the husband has the courage to tell her of her faults."

"That makes one glad that Eng-

land is not a polyandrous country," said Nellie.

"Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful," quoted Bertie. "Give me an enemy every time."

"But let me choose my enemy, if he has to kiss me!" laughed Nellie.

Althea said nothing; she felt the pity in Moorlake's eyes. The salad-dressing incident was unimportant in itself, but it was a text from which her whole married life might have been preached.

After dinner North's humor changed and he became affable again.

Bertie sat down to the piano, and Nellie led North into the far end of the room to look at some new photographs, with the kind intent to leave Althea and Clement together. They were for some minutes speechless. Althea sat stiff and upright like an automaton, her cheeks burning—a poor, unhappy creature who had been pitchforked by fate into the wrong environment, or placed by Providence in a hard primary school, according as one inclines to the pagan or the Christian theory of life. Moorlake was thinking how he pitied her—how, with scarcely a throb of his lower nature, he could find it in his heart to shelter her in his arms. She inwardly palpitated with what she scarcely recognized yet as an immense love.

Bertie began singing. He had a lovely tenor voice, which he made light of, as of his other gifts. The second verse of his song—one of the perfect love songs of the world—became thrilling as he sang it—he, the happy married man with no yearnings for a change of lot. The eternal, passionate unrest that is in the heart of every artist—writer, singer, player—burst out in the lines:

*"Wenn du mich liebst so wie ich dich,
Soll ich dein eigen sein—
Heiss wie der Stahl und fest wie der Stein
Soll deine Liebe sein."*

"Do you know German?" whispered Althea.

"Enough to understand," said Clement.

Bertie went on and plunged into Grieg's "*Ich Liebe Dich*"—and how much Grieg has to answer for is known to all those who have heard that song sung as it should be. Clement lost himself in the music.

It was not he, but somebody else in temporary possession of his body, who leaned over to Althea and said:

"You have never been to my studio. Won't you come to tea with me one day this week?"

She looked at him and answered, without hesitation, swiftly and softly:

"Thank you. Tuesday?"

"Yes; about five."

"I will come."

Nellie came back from the corner with the photographs, but the word was spoken and the hour of fate had struck.

VII

TUESDAY arrived in due course, for good or ill. As the hour of five approached Moorlake was restless. He wanted to smoke, but would not, lest the atmosphere should be contaminated by the fumes of tobacco. He wished Mrs. North to find everything as fresh and charming as possible. He had arranged some flowers with his own hands; a row of small glasses full of violets stood on the high, carved mantelpiece and a cluster of long-stemmed pink roses made a delicious spot of color on the table. A fire of logs was crackling in a hearth of De Morgan tiles, diffusing a faint acrid perfume through the great room. There were red-shaded lamps burning; Moorlake hated electric light, and used it only in the adjoining room, where he worked. The so-called studio was really a combination of library and sitting-room, where he spent his leisure hours at home and occasionally entertained his friends.

To-day he was more nervous and expectant than he had been for years. He was surprised at his state of mind. He desired Mrs. North's presence, and yet dreaded it. He asked which

of the two warring personalities in his nature was to have the upper hand—the gentleman or the scoundrel.

He realized that what was outwardly a friendly, casual visit and an ordinary tea-drinking was perhaps to be the turning-point in his relations with Althea; and he swore to himself that he would say and do nothing that could render her more unhappy in the long run.

At a quarter to five the bell rang.

In a few moments the servant entered and asked if he would see Mrs. Hilyer.

Moorlake was intensely annoyed, but did not dare to refuse.

"Mrs. Hilyer knows that I'm at home?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," said the maid.

"Ask her to come up," he said.

Mrs. Hilyer entered almost directly. In the subdued light her small, pretty face looked pale—perhaps also because it stood out against a high collar of dark fur.

"Am I interrupting you?" she asked, holding out her hand.

"No," said Moorlake, with cold civility; "I seldom work after dark. Won't you sit down?" and he drew a chair toward the fire.

"Not yet—I want to look about first. What a room for a dance!—but you ought to have electric light."

"I don't care for dancing, you know."

"Perhaps your friends might!"

"I am not an altruistic person, I'm afraid."

"How selfish men are!"

Clarice was frozen by his manner—by the invulnerability of the armor in which she had never been able to find a crevice.

Moorlake was averse to rudeness, but he feared intensely to make her prolong her visit.

"How does the room compare with my Roman studio?" he asked, more pleasantly, while he strained his ears for the sound of wheels or the tinkle of a doorbell.

"It is very nice, as far as I can see in this dim, religious light. Ah, vio-

lets!" and she daintily sniffed the warm air. "I believe you are expecting someone to tea!"

"My mother sometimes has tea with me here," said Clement. "You know she lives with me." He could not help smiling at his own words.

Clarice laughed.

"How funny you are! And yet you haven't much sense of humor," she said.

"Perhaps that's why I am amusing to my friends," said he. "Yes, I suppose I'm a very dull, humdrum sort of person."

"You don't look it!" and Clarice fixed her penetrating eyes on his face. "You appear at this moment to be in a fever of expectation—or annoyance. Which is it? You have a beautiful red spot in the middle of each cheek. Never saw you with a color before. It makes you look years younger."

At any other time her impertinence would have entertained him, but just now, when his heart was in his ears, he had scarcely a thought for her.

"I will have pity on you," she went on, "and leave you. I came really to know whether you would dine with me to-morrow night and go to the play. I've got a box at the Lyceum."

"You are very kind," said Moorlake, "but I am engaged."

Clarice rose.

"Too bad!" she said, and at that moment the bell rang. "Ah! There comes the unknown she! I must fly! I'm afraid we shall meet in the hall!" and with a light laugh Mrs. Hilyer left the room, without further leave-taking.

Moorlake was intensely annoyed. Before he could collect his thoughts the maid announced Mrs. North. She came toward him in great trepidation.

"Oh, I'm so vexed!" she exclaimed, as he took her hand. "I ran against Mrs. Hilyer on the stairs. What will she think?"

"What could she think except that you kindly stepped in to see me, as she did?" said Clement, reassuringly. "You know quite well that if there were any harm in your coming here

I should not have invited you. I didn't like to tell my maid not to let in anyone but you; servants gossip so."

"And is she used to this sort of thing?—your having women to tea, I mean?" asked Althea, looking about her vaguely, not yet recovered from her perturbation.

"I don't have many," said Clement, smiling at the unconscious little note of jealousy in her question. "But there are enough visitors at the house to make your call quite ordinary."

"Not to you, I hope," said Althea, with a timid but bright smile.

He pressed her hand for an instant.

"Give me your cape, and take this chair," he said, taking her wrap from her.

"How pretty it is here! And the flowers—so fresh and sweet! Did you get them because of me?"

He could hardly bear the look in her eyes as she turned to him—an expression of pure worship and trust.

"How good and thoughtful you are to me!" she went on. "I never knew that men could be like that till I met you."

She was not in a condition of mind to weigh her words. Moorlake saw this, and had to fight down his own rising passion—a passion compounded more of pity than of love.

"How often must I tell you that I'm no better than other men?" he said, gently.

"You can't make me believe it!" she said. "You're the first man who has ever brought me any happiness."

Her sweet face was turned toward him in the firelight, her eager, shining eyes were fixed on his.

"Any man who could knowingly make you unhappy can't be worth much!" said he, impulsively, forgetting that he was condemning her husband.

Just then the maid entered with tea, and the conversation became, perforce, conventional. When she had left the room Althea said: "I made up my mind not to tell you my troubles to-day. I want to rest here, and forget."

"Would it make you happier to tell them? Could I help you?" he asked. "I have known since our first meeting that you were unhappy, but you have never told me why."

"But you know! you feel! You've seen me with Oliver; how could you not know?" she said. "I don't know how I can bear my life. I don't want to be disloyal, though the time for loyalty seems gone. He has thrown me away."

"Poor man!" said Moorlake.

"You pity him?" asked Althea, amazed.

"I pity any man, however unworthy, who has lost your love."

Althea flushed deeply.

"He never had my love!—such love as I am capable of now. Listen. Let me tell you the truth—a part of the truth. I've come to-day because I couldn't help it. I wanted so much to see you alone—away from the shams of society, away from the jealous espionage of the man who grudges me even my friendships. I've got to the point where I can't go on without support. The struggle is awful. You've seen me with him—you know. It's sinful for me to live with him any longer. Even for the sake of the child I can't. I hate the sound of his voice—the touch of his hand. I must get free. I shall go mad if I don't!"

She was trembling with violent emotion. Moorlake was scarcely less stirred. He took her hand in both his own and bent over her. "Althea!" he said. "My heart aches for you!"

She went on, wildly: "He has crushed me gradually, year after year. He has killed my spirit—stolen my youth—broken my heart! My life is dust and ashes. People call him a good man; so he is, without a vice—only the vices of the slave driver and the torturer. I clung to him for years, and he has unclasped my fingers one by one! If he would strike me I could leave him; if he were unfaithful I should be free to live my own life. But he is only cruel—cruel."

She broke down utterly now and wept.

Moorlake knelt beside her and laid his hand on her shoulder.

"My dear, my dear!" he said, his voice vibrating with feeling, "I can't watch you cry like this!"

For a few moments she clung to him silently, while her sobs moderated. Her face was buried in her hands. His touch seemed an anodyne for all suffering.

"Forgive me," she said, weakly; "I'm so unstrung." She reached out one hand and laid it lightly on the side of his face.

His heart throbbed wildly.

"I long to take you in my arms and shield you against the world!" he said, very low. "But the shield would be but a target to invite the arrows of the world!"

He was holding himself back with the full force of his strong will. Her instinctive caress had shaken him sorely.

"I know—I know," she said. "But there is still friendship. You have said that there is no middle course, but that is not so. I can't hide from you how much you are to me; I don't feel any shame—why should I be ashamed to love what is high and noble? I never dreamed that you could care for me much, but I *know* you are my friend. Aren't you? You like me?"

She was not touching him now, but her eyes were probing his own.

"My dear," he answered, "I like you only too well."

"Then we can have a friendship," she said, triumphantly—"a beautiful secret compact—a bond too sacred to be made known to any but ourselves. I will make our love so high and pure and stainless that God himself could not chide us for it. Isn't it possible?"

"A dream, dear child," he said, sadly—"a beautiful dream."

"Only a dream?" she answered, eagerly. "You hinted once that there had been for years a woman in your life—a love that made all other love impossible. I don't ask to know where she is—whether she be alive

or dead; I ask only the second place. To be second in your heart would be happiness enough for me. Ah, do you despise me? Am I unwomanly?"

"Despise you?" he cried. "Despise you, my child? Is it nothing that such a woman as you cares for me? Is it nothing that you awaken feelings that I thought were dead? I can't have your beautiful friendship; I've told you, warned you, that you mustn't trust me. I should only injure you—make your life harder than it is, believe me."

She hid her face once more.

"You *do* despise me," she said, chokingly; "you *do*!"

"So little," he answered, "that I wish to God I were a different man and you a free woman. Two things hold us apart, the power of the past and my affection for you. I can't offer you anything that won't be an insult to you."

She looked up with a white face.

"Ah," she said, "you don't love me!"

"I care so much for you," he said, "that I won't sacrifice you."

"You don't understand me yet," Althea protested. "You won't understand me. I swear that I want to be your friend—to see you sometimes—to have in my heart the knowledge that one man cares for me—that I care for and believe in one man."

"I do understand you," he said, sadly. "I recognize your purity, and I realize that I am—a man."

"But such a man!" she said; "so much higher and nobler—"

"An ordinary man," said Moorlake, "who tries not to be a black-guard. It isn't always easy. Don't think it's easy."

She looked at his pale, stern face.

"Oh, I love you for it!" she cried. There was a kind of radiance in her regard. "I'm not ashamed; I'm proud that I love the best man I've ever known."

She turned away from him and walked toward the dim end of the room.

He stood by the fire, looking blind-

ly down at the flames. His mind was in a whirl.

In a few moments Althea returned and stood beside him. They faced each other.

"So this is the end?" she said, quietly.

"Of what?" he asked, knowing her meaning, yet wishing to gain time.

"Of our friendship—our love—what you please to call it," she replied.

"I know no other course," he said.

She did not know what the answer cost him.

"We shall never meet again? I have spoiled it all—the hope I had," she said, wearily.

"For a time—for a time," he murmured. "Let us not meet for a little while."

"It must be so, if you say it. Will you kiss me once, Clement—for good-bye?"

His breast heaved. He was less calm than she, for she was learning what despair means.

He took her in his arms; she raised her mouth to his.

And at that moment the door opened, and Oliver North stood on the threshold.

VIII

For several seconds no one spoke.

Althea clung to Moorlake's arm, and after the first involuntary cringe faced her husband boldly. North's face was white in the dim light, and set in an expression of restrained fury.

"So," he said, presently, "she was right. You are here with your lover!"

"He is not my lover," said Althea, in a weak voice. She was trembling, but she did not flinch.

"That is for him to explain to me," said North, with a black scowl. He made a step nearer. Althea threw herself before Moorlake.

"Don't touch him! Don't dare!" she cried. "He's too good for you to touch!" Then she turned to Clement.

"Leave me with him; he shall hear the truth from me."

"I can't leave you," said Moorlake.

"Let me speak to your husband."

His whole anxiety seemed for her—not for anything that might happen to himself.

"I implore you!" she said, and pointed to the door.

Moorlake turned to North. "I will come back when you want me," he said.

North's eyes were fixed on Althea.

"My business is with her. Time enough to settle with you," he answered. He glanced at Clement as he left the room, then turned on his wife with a face fearful in its bitter anger.

"Well," he said, "you shameless woman, what have you to say? How long have you been deceiving me with this scoundrel?"

Althea, though blanched, gathered firmness every moment.

"I deceived you!" she said. "I have treated you like a gentleman when you were insulting me with every breath! I have stayed quietly in your house while you made my home a hell; but from this moment I'll deceive you no longer—I hate you! I hate you! You have done all you could to drive me to dishonor; but I am innocent. Clement Moorlake is a man to die for—but he doesn't love me. Why should he? But I'm not ashamed of loving him—and I do—I do! Wouldn't any poor, crushed, broken-hearted woman love the best man she's ever known?" She paused a moment, panting.

"You confess to me that you love him?" cried North, with concentrated rage, "and you say he isn't your lover? A likely story! Does an innocent woman go to a man's rooms alone and kiss him? You ask me to believe that?"

"I asked him to kiss me—because we were never to meet again," said Althea. "Would to God he did love me—but he doesn't."

North snarled inarticulately and half-raised his arm.

"Strike me," she said, "and make

me free of you forever! But I tell you, if you hurt Clement I'll kill you—kill you with my naked hands."

"You a decent woman?" he cried. "You're low and vile! If you're not his mistress you ought to be! Stay here till you make him love you! I wouldn't soil my hands with either of you. There are other ways of punishing a woman like you." He seized her by the shoulders, dashed her to the floor and strode from the room.

Moorlake was in the inner room. He heard the fall, and hurried to Althea's assistance. By that time the frenzied North had left the house, banging the door behind him.

Althea's head had struck against the table, and she was half-stunned.

Moorlake knelt and raised her head till it rested on his arm. There were signs of returning consciousness, and at that moment Mrs. Moorlake entered. The stately old lady, white-haired and with eyes like Clement's, stood looking at her son and Althea with a startled gaze.

"What is this, Clement? Who is it?" she asked, sternly.

"Mrs. North is ill, mother. Will you ring for your maid, please?" said Moorlake, softly.

Althea's eyelids fluttered, and she feebly raised her hand to her head.

"Oh!" she murmured, "we are not alone. Let me get up."

"Are you able?" asked Clement. "Perhaps, mother, you would better not ring. Mrs. North is recovering."

Althea got up slowly, swaying slightly as she regained her feet.

"I must go," she said, faintly. All her force was gone.

"Will you take my carriage?" asked Mrs. Moorlake, stiffly. "It is waiting still."

"Thank you, I will go home. Oh!" she wailed, suddenly, "I *have* no home."

Mrs. Moorlake looked shocked and surprised.

"You are ill," she said. "Let me send my maid with you."

"I will take Mrs. North," said Moorlake, firmly. He placed Althea's cape about her shoulders. "I will

take you to Mrs. Vincent's," he said to her in a low tone; "but you must first have a glass of wine." He made her sit down. "Perhaps I'd better fetch the wine myself. You will stay here, mother," he said. "I will see that Mrs. North reaches home safely."

He was gone only a minute or two. Mrs. Moorlake said nothing; she saw that Althea was dazed and unequal to conversation. Clement returned with a glass of port. Althea drank it submissively, and revived a little. He led her from the room and down the stairs like a child. The hall was empty, and they got into the carriage without being seen by anyone but the coachman.

"Lean on me, dear," he said, gently, and she put her head against his shoulder.

Her mind was torpid. Everything seemed wrapped in a haze. She knew that she was touching Clement—that he was supporting her, as a father might. The contact gave her no thrill—only a dull sense that she was being cared for, and that he was a tower of strength. They reached Campden Hill in silence. He left her in the carriage and went in to prepare Nellie Vincent. She was just going up stairs to dress for dinner, but greeted him with her usual cordiality.

"Mrs. North is in the carriage," he said; "she needs you very much. There has been a terrible scene with North—she has had a blow, and can't talk much. You'll be good to her, won't you?" He said this holding Nellie's hand. She had never seen him so white and agitated.

"Clement! tell me more. What does this mean?" she cried.

"Much to both of us, I fear," he answered. "She will tell you when she is better; but we must not keep her waiting."

Together they went out to the carriage and brought Althea in.

IX

On some nervous temperaments a sudden shock produces a succeeding torpor of body and brain. When Al-

thea found herself in her friend's boudoir her one desire was to sleep. She had no other craving left. Nothing seemed to matter. The great crisis of her life, through which she had just passed, had little significance for her. She had let Moorlake go without a word; she had not even thanked him.

"Let me sleep, Nellie," she said, when Mrs. Vincent questioned her. "Something awful has happened—Oliver—Clement—it's all confused. Don't ask me till to-morrow."

Nellie had the sense to see that she must not try to learn anything to-night. She herself helped Althea to undress, induced her to drink a cup of tea, and got her into bed. She lighted the fire already laid, then, returning to her own room, rang for the housemaid and explained that Mrs. North had been taken ill while calling, and must not be disturbed.

Nellie's own confidential maid had fetched the tea, and could be trusted not to gossip in the servants' hall.

Nellie had barely time to slip on a tea gown when dinner was announced. Bertram Vincent was waiting for her when she entered the drawing-room. He stood before the fire, whistling blithely to himself.

"Bertie," said Nellie, coming quickly toward him, "something awful has happened," and in a few words she told all she knew.

Vincent whistled again, this time with a changed note.

"Clement!" he exclaimed. "Well, I'm blowed!"

"Yes, Clement! of all people!" said Nellie. "Come; we must behave as usual."

"After all, it's our servants who keep us straight," said Bertie, with a sudden smile. It tickled his sense of humor that he and his wife must talk commonplace, and eat clear soup while poor, ruined, sick-hearted Althea lay in a half-stupor up stairs—and meanwhile the demure parlor-maid, under her spotless cap with streamers, held the distinct impression of the bruise she had seen on Mrs. North's face.

At last dessert came, and the maid departed. Wild with impatience, Nellie jumped up.

"Parkins is on guard, Bertie; she won't let the others in. But I'm going up. Oh, poor Althea! What do you think it is?"

"An infernal muddle, no doubt. Why did Althea go to Clement's alone?"

"Why, many people do. I do."

"I know, but that's different. We've known Moorlake twenty years, and then, I am not Oliver North."

"No, thank God!"

Bertie reflected for a moment.

"Will they fight, do you think?" asked Nellie. "*Do* men have duels in England?"

"More likely, if there's anything in it, North will shoot 'em both!" said Bertie. "Do you remember that unfortunate dinner last Summer, when they met? It was in this very room that Oliver gave vent to his opinion on faithless wives. He won't give much quarter, I expect."

Nellie was half-crying.

"Whatever she's done it's his fault—the brute!" she said, vehemently.

"But Moorlake, of all men!" said Vincent, wondering, as his wife left him.

The night seemed short to Althea. Her sleep was deep and dreamless. When she woke the dim Winter light barely made the room visible. She looked idly at the bed curtains, noted the pattern, and realized that they were not her own. By the time she sat up and looked at the other objects in the room, Nellie, who had slept on the sofa all night, entered fresh from her bath and morning coffee.

"Well, dearest," she said, trying to keep her voice steady, "you've had a splendid sleep! You must be hungry. You shall have breakfast at once. How do you feel, love?"

"My head aches a little," said Althea. "I think I am rather hungry." Then, with sudden excitement, "Nellie, why am I here?"

"You were ill, dear—and Clement

—that is—I—you were so tired—” Nellie came to a standstill.

A wave of recollection broke over Althea.

“Oh, Nellie! Nellie! I remember! Clement! Is he safe? Where is he? *Where* is Oliver?” She clasped her hands tightly and fixed imploring eyes on her friend.

“Safe? Of course. Why not?” said Nellie. “He’s big enough to take care of himself, isn’t he, dear?”

The tragedy in Althea’s face frightened her into an attempt at playfulness.

“You don’t know,” said Althea. “I was stupid last night—I hurt my face—or head—when Oliver threw me down.”

She began to cry weakly.

“My dear,” implored Nellie, her own eyes wet, “you mustn’t! Lie down. Be good, love. Let me bring you some breakfast. Sarah will make a fire, and your own Nellie, who loves you, will take care of you. Don’t, don’t, that’s a love!”

The childless woman crooned over her like a mother with a baby.

She was quieted for the time.

The blazing coals were comforting and cheering, and made one forget the yellow day outside. Nature asserted herself, and Althea was really glad to eat and drink. Life looks so different after breakfast! She was then able to tell Mrs. Vincent all. When the story was ended, Nellie sat beside the bed, silent.

“Do you hate me, Nell, for being so wicked?” asked Althea, timidly.

“I hate Oliver!” said Nellie. “No one else. But I think Moorlake should not have let it come to this.”

“Oh, it wasn’t his fault! He is the best—the—”

“I know—I know. They always are! I’ve known Moorlake twenty years, and I thought him the only sensible *attractive* man of my acquaintance—it’s easy for the other kind to be sensible. I’m disappointed in him.”

Althea shook her head on the pillow.

“You’ve known him twenty years,

but you don’t know him as I do,” she said.

“Possibly not just that way,” said Nellie, drily. Then, presently: “Althea, does he love you?”

Althea winced piteously.

“Not as I do him,” she said.

“There was that other woman—” began Nellie.

Althea raised her hand.

“Don’t tell me!” she cried. “If he wants me to know he’ll tell me himself!”

“I can’t tell you, for I don’t know anything. Clement’s as close as wax. I only know that it’s generally understood that he has loved one woman all his life. She may be dead—I don’t know.”

There was a short silence. The firelight flickered cosily on the rose-pink walls and the flowery hangings. Both women were deep in thought.

“Nellie,” said Althea, presently, “will Oliver try to kill me—or Clement?”

“I sha’n’t let him kill you, dear!” said Nellie. “Moorlake must defend himself.”

“It would be awful to die so—” Althea shuddered a little—“and for such a little sin!”

“It would be a large price to pay for one kiss,” said Nellie, cynically. “Well, well, we must think what’s to be done. Bertie had better go to your house. He can manage Oliver.”

“Oh, Nellie, my child! my poor baby! How wicked I am! Isn’t it terrible that I’ve loved *him* so much that I’ve almost forgotten Violet! Oh, Nellie!” and she began to cry afresh.

When she was once more soothed Mrs. Vincent left her and went to confer with Bertie.

“You must go at once to the Norths!” she said. “You’ll be able to find out what sort of mood Oliver is in, and see how Violet is, too. Althea is fretting about her.”

Bertie made a small grimace.

“Pleasant mission for a fellow who hates scenes!” he said; but he went.

When Nellie returned to her friend she found her with a new idea.

"Something has flashed across me!" she exclaimed. "When Oliver came in yesterday he said: 'She was right! You *are* with your lover!' Now, 'she' must be Clarice Hilyer. I forgot to tell you that I met her in the hall."

Nellie Vincent threw up her hands.

"Good Lord! Then you *are* lost!" she cried. "That woman will hound you to destruction. Why, she's been after Moorlake for years. Oh, Althea, you silly baby, *why* did you go there?"

"Because I was mad," said Mrs. North, gloomily.

When Bertram Vincent arrived in Pont street he was met by a solemn-faced maid at the door.

"Is Mr. North at home, Alice?" he asked. He knew her well.

"No, sir."

"Miss Violet, then?"

"No, sir."

"I came to tell you where Mrs. North is; I thought you might be worried about her. She was taken faint yesterday while driving on Campden Hill—came to us, and Mrs. Vincent is taking good care of her."

Alice's calm broke up.

"Come in, sir, please," she said, with a sob. "There's no good in keepin' the truth from you, sir, you as knows us all so well, sir. Mr. North's gone—that's the truth; went off last night, ragin'-like, and—and he's taken Miss Violet."

"Taken Miss Violet!" cried Vincent, aghast. "Where to, in heaven's name?"

"That's what we don't know, sir. And he's gone without nurse, and the poor woman is near crazy. He come in about six o'clock yesterday like a wild man. 'Send cook to me,' says he, 'and tell nurse to get Miss Violet ready to travel—to pack her clothes as fast as she can.' 'For 'ow long, sir?' I says, very respectful—for he was glarin'. 'A year,' says he—'two years! Pack all her things, and be quick!' Cook come up all in a tremble. She told me he said to mind everything while he was away,

till she heard from him, and he gave her a cheque for forty pounds for expenses, which looks bad, master being so close-fisted in general. 'And will the mistress be back, sir?' asks cook. 'Never!' says master, in an awful voice. 'She's dead,' says he. 'Oh, poor, dear lady!' cries cook. We all loves Mrs. North, y' know, sir. 'How did she die?' says cook. 'She killed herself—and me,' he says, wild-like. Well, you know, sir, that couldn't be true, because Mr. North wasn't a bit dead himself, only stormin' around cruel. So we plucked up spirit, sir, and—and—here we are," she ended, lamely.

These were the tidings that Vincent had to carry back to Campden Hill.

X

THE next day Moorlake called at the Vincents' to inquire for Althea. Nellie came to ask if she would like to see him.

Althea was sitting huddled up in a great chair before the morning-room fire. She had scarcely stirred or spoken all day. At the mention of Clement's name a wave of color swept over her face.

"No, no! I can't see him!" she said.

"You will have to see him sooner or later," said Nellie. "He will come again and again until you do. Why not now?"

"I can't," said Althea, and that was all she would say. As soon, however, as Nellie left the room she was in a fever. Oh, to see him—just a glimpse! Oh, to hear him—one tone of his voice!

The apathy of the past few hours changed to a consuming hunger for his presence. Yet, she thought, of what use was his coming? If he had not loved her before he would despise her now—when she had led him into a position so hateful to a man of honor. He had never loved her—she knew that; only felt a great pity, a great kindness, a great regret that so

much love should have been given unsought, undesired. Some men would have played with the passion; would have extracted thrills and sensations from it, while their souls held aloof. She thanked God that Moorlake was better than that, and she realized, amid the pangs of a most human craving, that it was better to preserve one's ideal than to have a surfeit of mock love.

The knowledge that he was so near, yet invisible, inaudible to her made her long to go to him. But the awe in which she held him—now more than ever—kept her where she was, and would not let her go.

In a little while, though the time seemed long, Nellie Vincent returned to the morning-room. She sat down by Althea, seeing the eager question of her eyes.

"He is very sad, very troubled, Althea," she said. "He did not say much—only asked about you, whether you had any plans, and how you were."

"Did you say anything about Violet?" asked Althea, in a weak voice.

"Bertie told him. He was awfully shocked."

"Did he speak of seeing me?"

"He only said, 'If I can be of any use, let me know.'"

"And how did he look?"

"Pale—and older."

"Oh, Clement! Clement!" Althea covered her face with her hands.

"I who would die for him have brought him only trouble."

Nellie did not answer; she only held her friend's hand and patted it.

Her mind was fixed on the near future, and the prospect was a disquieting one. How was Althea to regain her child? How was a scandal to be averted? Sooner or later something must transpire. It was likely that Clarice Hilyer would be glad to injure the woman of whom she had suddenly become jealous. Besides all this, Althea's financial position was insecure. She had now but a trifle to live on, as evidently part of Oliver's scheme of revenge was to leave her without means of support.

"It would have been kinder to shoot her," said Nellie to Bertie next day.

"I can't see what she's to do," admitted Bertie. "I saw Ballard, the American lawyer, this morning. He tells me that Althea can't get the child unless she could get someone to steal it, and we don't even know where it is. Who knows what North is doing? He may be getting a divorce—or rather, he may do so when he arrives, for I suppose he is gone to America."

"How can he do that? He has no grounds," said Nellie.

"You don't know American law, my dear," answered Vincent. "Ballard tells me that a man can go to Dakota, live there ninety days, start divorce proceedings of which his wife is perfectly ignorant; the case 'goes by default,' as they call it, and the wife has papers served on her simply informing her that she's divorced. That may happen to Althea."

"Heavens, what a wicked law!" cried Nellie. "And could Clement marry her?"

"That I'm not quite certain of. Ballard left me before we got to that. Do you think Clement wants to marry her?"

Nellie was silent for a moment. Then she said: "I think he would feel it his duty."

"Althea wouldn't take him on those terms. She's too proud," said Bertie.

"My dear," said Nellie, "when a woman worships a man as Althea worships Moorlake, she takes him on any terms—especially if they're respectable ones."

"Well," said Bertie, "we shall see."

No one besides the Vincents and Moorlake could account for North's sudden absence—except Clarice Hilyer, who had made the mischief. She needed all her coolness when she thought of meeting Moorlake, as she might do any day. She found herself afraid to pass his door; every day she stood on her doorstep before going out, nervously looking up and down Cheyne Walk, dreading to see his tall

figure. She knew that to inflict further injury on Althea North would be to lose Clement even as an acquaintance, and she preserved an unbroken silence. She never did harm to any woman unless that woman stood in her way; and even then her hatred was impersonal and calm, scarcely deserving the name of a passion.

Mrs. Moorlake understood her son's temper and character too well to question him in regard to the scene in the studio. Clement was a man who scrupulously guarded his individual rights of thought and action. His mother's unyielding dignity had been reproduced in him. He gave no one the right to question him, and she had always respected his reticence. In so doing she made it possible for them to live together in harmony. Mrs. Moorlake had never before entered his studio without an invitation, and she blamed herself for having done so on this occasion.

As for Clement, he found the work of years undone in an instant. He had strenuously—perhaps priggishly—protected himself against the charm of women, only to find himself in the odious position of a man accused of a sin he has not committed—branded as a seducer, while he has almost attained to the renunciation of a saint. The temptation had been a fiery one, and he had come through it morally unscathed; yet here he was, responsible for a woman's ruin. What though that ruin was imaginary? It was real enough in the sense that her husband believed in it, and had left her in jealous fury. She was now dependent on three persons—the Vincents and himself—and of these three he was the only one who was morally responsible. His one poor, abortive, brotherly kiss had ended worse than the fiercest embrace. He would have found something ludicrous in the case had he not been the hero of it. His quickened fancy pictured the cheerless drama that might follow. He saw himself, for the rest of his life, charged with the fate of Althea North. She was pretty, she was charming; she loved him, but—yes, that was it

—she loved him too much. It was an entire reversal of the proper order of things. His fine taste was offended by it. Now that he was away from Althea he felt astonishingly cold. There was none of the warmth that her sweetness and pretty, pleading ways evoked in him when they were together. He had been inexpressibly relieved when she refused to see him. He commended her discretion—a quality not always displayed by women who are madly in love. Yet he knew that the meeting must come, and the thought of it sat on him like a nightmare. One side of his nature hated the other. He *wanted* to love Althea. Tepid affection wasn't enough; pity, and the kindness which every chivalrous man feels toward a nice woman, were not enough. He longed to rouse some emotion, some enthusiasm, in himself. His nature was like his face, where the cold, pure Grecian outlines were contradicted by the fire of the eyes; and at present the coldness had it all its own way.

Meanwhile, Althea stayed on with the Vincents. She went to Pont street one day to get her clothes and various belongings that she needed. The servants looked at her in an awestruck way, but they seemed full of affection for her and of stifled indignation toward Oliver. North's solicitor, Alice, the parlormaid, said, had called two days before and had put the household on a different footing. All the maids but Alice and the cook had been paid a month's wages and sent away. The other two were ordered to remain on board wages until further instructions should be received. The drawing-room was dismantled, and its sheeted forms gave Althea a shock. The house was full of memories—most of them miserable ones. Violet's bedroom was more than she could bear. It brought back the hours that mother and child had spent together—the hours always the most satisfactory in a mother's life. Althea had thought then that she knew what maternal love was, but the throbbing wave of affection that swelled over her now as she looked at

the vacant crib made her past feelings seem lukewarm and feeble by comparison.

She kept down her sobs while she selected such garments as she needed and superintended the packing of them. One of the dresses was the pale mauve satin she had worn on the occasion of her first meeting with Moorlake—the meeting that was destined to alter her life. She scarcely knew whether she loved or hated it. She remembered how she had never had enough clothes. She had gone to America the wife of a comparatively rich man, and had felt herself shabby and ashamed before her old friends. Each garment had some painful association; her life with Oliver had had little happiness.

She got away from the house of ghosts as soon as she could and drove back to Campden Hill. All the way she was occupied with wondering how she was to live—whether she could not force Oliver to make some provision for her. The Vincents loved her, and she was devoted to them, but she could not live her whole life with them. She felt a consuming desire to get away from London, to know that there was no chance of seeing Clement—the one person whom she longed for—and dreaded. When she reached the Vincents' she went at once into the morning-room. The afternoon was gray and cheerless, darkening into evening. Even the glowing fire and the flowers, of which the vases were full, could not make the room bright. She stood looking about for Nellie, and saw Clement Moorlake standing by the window. The shock stopped her heart, then sent it bounding. Moorlake looked so tall and pale and grave that he somehow overpowered her. She did not even stretch out her hand to him; she stood looking at him with wide eyes. It was Clement that spoke.

"I was waiting for Mrs. Vincent," he said, "but I am glad to have this opportunity of seeing you."

He realized that he was priggish and stilted—that he had said the wrong thing.

"I will tell Nellie," said Althea, mechanically, and moved toward the door.

Moorlake came a step nearer.

"No, no—don't, please. I want to see you."

Althea returned to the fire, and stood taking off her gloves. She could not keep her hands still.

"I cannot blame you," she said, "if you want never to see me again."

That was also the wrong thing to say, she thought. She should have kept the appealing tone out of her voice.

"That is impossible!" said Clement. He was fighting down his distaste for the situation—trying to warm over his sympathy, that had grown cold. "I want so much to tell you—" He paused. What *did* he want to tell her? He was distinctly conscious that he wished to tell her nothing. Meanwhile she stood opposite him, with white, pathetic face. She had put down her gloves, and now drew the pins from her hat, and laid that aside. Then she smoothed the heavy masses of chestnut hair that had fallen over her ears.

Why couldn't he love her? Why couldn't he take her into his arms and comfort her? It seemed to him nobler now to pretend than to freeze the poor creature by an exhibition of the truth. Yet something held him back.

Althea found words before he could go on.

"I want to tell you, Mr. Moorlake," she said, "what an agony of remorse I've suffered for having brought you to this. I understand your position; don't think I imagine—anything that is not so. You must not trouble about me. I have good friends who will do all they can for me."

In that moment he admired her. Some of the ice melted.

"Dear Mrs. North," he said, leaning toward her, "I want you to feel that I am your friend, though I have so far brought only unhappiness into your life. I have no words to express how I regret this. If I can help you in any way—" he paused, again at a loss.

Neither was sorry that Nellie Vincent at that moment opened the door and ended the abortive interview. When she saw Althea she started back, then hastily decided to behave naturally.

"I've kept you waiting, Clement," she said, "but I was helping Bertie in the studio."

Althea took up her hat and gloves. "Good-bye," she said, turning to Moorlake, then quietly left the room.

Nellie looked after her, then at Moorlake.

"Can you say nothing—do nothing?" she demanded. "That poor thing will go mad."

Moorlake's face became set and haughty, and his thin nostrils quivered.

"You needn't look like that, Clement," said Nellie. "I've known you twenty years, and I'm one of the women you can't intimidate. I'm as sorry for you as I can be, but Althea didn't get into this miserable mess all alone, and she's got to be helped. I'm always on the side of the women, you know. We're handicapped from the cradle to the grave."

Moorlake almost smiled at this outburst. He was very fond of Mrs. Vincent.

"My dear Nellie," he said, "I don't know how I looked at you—I only know how I feel, and nobody need envy me."

"Let me know how you feel, please," said Nellie. "You see, we're all accustomed to look on you as something holy and remote—something on a marble pedestal. We've always expected you to do the right thing, and you've always done it, so far as we know. Now, all of a sudden, you've stepped down, and I naturally feel anxious to hear what you think about it. I can't think it's no business of mine. I love Althea North—she is my best friend—and at present I see ruin ahead of her—ruin without any compensation, apparently—that is, if you don't love her."

Moorlake was making a heroic effort to conquer his repugnance to personal conversation. It was indeed

difficult to preserve the haughty pose with Nellie, the friend of his boyhood. Their relations had always been those cordial, unemotional ones that alone endure between women and men.

When he answered her his face wore an expression of unaffected kindness.

"I feel Mrs. North's position most keenly," he said. "It seems disloyal to be discussing her behind her back. I'm sure, if she ever felt any admiration for me she must have lost it by now. I was a brute to her just now!"

"I was afraid of it!" cried Nellie.

"Her poor face made me shiver, it was so wan and white! Do you know what you ought to have done? You should have simply taken her into your arms and told her you love her. I don't care whether you do or not. A lie like that will save a woman's reason sometimes. I'm not speaking in the interest of morality now. My heart simply bleeds for that girl. I've never entangled myself with any man—but then, mind you, I was never married to Oliver North!"

Moorlake regarded her with deep interest.

"You're a good woman, Nellie," he said, "and I'm a cold brute."

"Ah, my dear, the cold brutes are worse than the other kind when it comes to this. Here is this woman torturing herself, thinking she has lost your respect, as well as everything else, and you come and patronize her in a polite morning call . . . Oh, it's too much; I'm ashamed of you!"

Moorlake took his castigation meekly.

"Last time you met," Nellie went on, "she was in your arms. This time I dare say you didn't even shake hands with her. Oh, you men! I know your Spanish *hidalgo* airs—without any Spanish warmth behind them! I'm glad enough I was never in love with you!"

"Don't spare me," said Moorlake, a faint flicker of amusement crossing his face. "You do me good. But come, now, granted that I'm a brute, a statue, a Spanish *hidalgo*—all these conflicting epithets—what do you

think I ought to do? Let us be practical."

"I think," said Nellie, "that you ought to bolster up her self-respect. Don't keep on telling her you don't love her—that you kissed her because you were sorry for her. I'm sure you *did* tell her that—you look so guilty."

Moorlake smiled.

"I don't feel like laughing," he said, "but you are really very funny."

"I am seriously anxious about Althea's health. She is ill now—all the result of a few days' misery. How is she to live if she thinks you don't care for her? You must love her a little—now, don't you? Come, do tell me! Keep your offish ways for people who haven't known you for twenty years. I've never, in all that time, asked you an indiscreet question. Do answer just this one!"

"Nellie, there's no resisting you," said Moorlake. His hazel eyes looked very human—at last. "I hate talking about my feelings—I always have hated it; but you have a sort of right to know them now. I do—and I do not—love Althea. She attracts me, of course; I'm not the statue you think me; I care for her, in a way; I have great respect for her, for she is pure and good, and I pity her immensely because she is unfortunate and unhappy. But what I call love—the thing that means *me*—every part of me, physical, mental, spiritual—I can't offer her. I've offered it to nobody for fifteen years."

There was a long pause. Presently Nellie Vincent said, gravely:

"Thank you, Clement. I understand. It sounds like Althea's death-knell. There is one thing more I *must* ask you. Has it ever occurred to you that Oliver North may be gone to get a divorce?"

"Of course not," said Clement, calmly. "He couldn't possibly get one."

"Don't be too sure. Bertie tells me that in Dakota you can get a divorce for anything or nothing; and in that case——"

Clement flushed deeply.

"Yes," he said, "in that case——?"

"Althea would be free," said Nellie, very low, with averted eyes.

There was an electric silence.

Mrs. Vincent dreaded the first word; she feared that she had gone too far. Clement rose before he spoke.

"It is useless to speculate about all this," he said. "When the contingencies arise they must be faced. Until then——" He hesitated, holding out his hand.

"We're friends still, aren't we, Clement?" asked Nellie, looking up at him.

"Friends always, Nellie," he answered. "Good-bye."

XI

AFTER her encounter with Moorlake Althea broke down entirely. She went to bed early that evening, and did not get up for two weeks. There was no disease; she simply lay there, growing thinner, weaker, more lethargic. It didn't seem worth while to get up and dress. She would have forgotten to eat if Nellie had not insisted on her taking food. Moorlake was kept informed of her condition, but there was no communication between them. He was never out of Althea's mind, waking or sleeping, yet such was her languor that she felt no desire to see him again. He had become a beautiful abstraction. The Vincents were seriously alarmed. For the first fortnight they hesitated to consult a physician, but at last, when they realized that Althea was fading away, they sent for their own doctor.

Jim Burton—all his friends called him Jim—was only forty years old. He was a man of almost colossal size, with the skin of an infant and the smile of a cherub. Before he had talked five minutes to a patient the sufferer felt on the high road to recovery, and his charming buoyancy and hopefulness made him beloved by even comparative strangers, while his friends doted on him.

Of course, it was necessary to con-

fide in him to a certain extent. In any case, he would have known, after a glance at Mrs. North, that she was suffering from mental shock. Nellie took him in one day without warning Althea. She looked at him with eyes void of surprise, and listlessly greeted him; they had often met in society. Burton sat down and began talking of nearly everything except illness. Althea was soon languidly smiling. Burton described a first night at a leading theatre, where he had been the evening before.

The smile broadened, and in a quarter of an hour Althea was taking the trouble to talk a little. Nellie glowed approvingly in the background. Not a word was said about health, till, just as Burton was leaving, he casually felt Althea's pulse. It was so feeble that it shocked him, though the cherubic face never changed.

"I suspect you are not eating enough," he observed. "You're inclined to be anæmic, you know; you must eat."

Althea made a little face.

"She's awfully bad about that, Jim," said Nellie. "It takes me half an hour to make her take a cup of soup."

"She doesn't want soup; give her chops and steaks and whiskey-and-soda. Take her out driving to-morrow, if it's a decent morning," and the doctor departed, leaving a light and warmth in the spiritual atmosphere which had not been there when he came.

That afternoon Moorlake gave way to a sudden impulse—one that an American would have had long before. He was passing a flower shop, and instantly resolved to send some violets and roses to Althea. He ordered the young woman in the shop to unbind one of the great, flat, jammed-together bouquets of violets, liberating the poor little blossoms and removing the bundle of straws around which, for unknown reasons, the stems are gathered; the result was a lovely, fragrant, loose bunch surrounded by leaves. This, with a

handful of tea roses, he ordered to be sent to Campden Hill. On his card he wrote, "So grieved that you are ill;" then, after a moment's reflection, added "Clement."

To him that addition of his Christian name meant a great deal; he supposed it would mean much to her also. It seemed a sort of acknowledgment that their intimacy had not yet snapped in two—a declaration that he meant to stand by her.

The box was carried to Althea's bed. When Nellie came in to have tea with her, she found her lying with her face covered with roses and violets.

Mrs. Vincent brushed the flowers aside and looked into her eyes. The soul had come back to them.

"Clement?" asked Nellie.

"Yes," breathed Althea, softly, and held out the little card, crushed and warm from lying in her hand.

"You've been kissing it!" said Nellie, banteringly, while tears stood in her eyes. "Oh, men, men! they hold us as you do that card—to kiss or to crush us, as the fancy takes them! What a pity it should be so!"

Althea's face beamed.

"I didn't know he cared," said Althea.

Next day she was a changed woman, and went for a drive.

Meanwhile it must not be supposed that the world was standing still. Women were gossiping over their teacups, as usual, and the North scandal was being pretty generally discussed. Its vagueness made it the more piquant. How do these things become known?

In the first place, Moorlake's servant had heard North run from the house and bang the door behind him. Then the coachman had seen Clement supporting Althea and almost lifting her into the carriage.

Next, the Vincents' parlormaid had observed the bruise on Althea's forehead. The Norths' servants were but human, and they had many friends in neighboring establishments. From the servants' hall to the drawing-room is but the distance of two flights of stairs, and news sails

like thistledown through the air. Before long it became known that the North household was broken up and that Mrs. North had taken refuge with the Vincents.

It was an anxious time for Clarice Hilyer. It was the first serious mistake of her life—from her point of view—when she told Oliver North that his wife was in Moorlake's studio. She dared contribute nothing to the surmises of the tea-drinkers, yet her very silence was taken to mean that she could, if she would, enlighten them. Thus she became in some wise involved in the mystery.

Althea's reputation had been so perfect that nothing was said against her. Her husband's meanness and neglect had been an open secret, and she had won everybody's respect by her silent endurance of his caprices. It was scarcely known among her friends that she had seen anything of Moorlake; for that reason he hoped intensely that a scandal might be avoided.

One afternoon Mrs. Hilyer sat in her white-paneled drawing-room, surrounded by the pretty and quaint things that her taste had brought together. One rose-shaded lamp painted the room with flattering tints. The tea had just been brought up, the bits of old silver on the tray twinkled delightfully in the firelight. Clarice poured out a cupful and daintily dropped a thin slice of lemon into it. At that moment Clement Moorlake was announced.

The hand she held out to him was cold with a sudden emotion.

He had never worn more markedly his "Spanish hidalgo air;" his manner was smooth and courtly, but there was a danger signal in his eyes.

"You see, I am neighborly at last," he said, as he sat down near her.

"You have owed me a call for quite a fortnight—a first call, too, that ought to be returned within a week. Cream or lemon?"

Her hand hovering over the flower-sprinkled cups was not only cold, but unsteady.

"Milk and no sugar, thank you,"

said Moorlake. "I was sorry your call was cut so short. I wish you had stayed."

Clarice dared to look toward him, and met his eyes full. He looked like an executioner.

"Are you quite sure you mean that?" she purred; then, to hide the shaking hand, she took up a silver cigarette case and selected a cigarette. "Will you smoke?" she asked.

"I will watch you," said Moorlake.

"Do you disapprove? Do you think it a vice?" she asked, as she applied a wax match and the tobacco caught fire.

"It is at least a vice that injures only the person who indulges in it," said Moorlake.

"It spoils the curtains," said Clarice.

"They are easily purified," said he.

"Would that we might send our consciences twice a year to be cleansed in the same way," said she.

"Do *you* feel the need of that? I thought women did not require that process."

He was drinking his tea, and she was smoking. She was thoroughly at home in her management of a cigarette; she kept the end dry and didn't gasp, swallow the smoke or get it into her eyes till they blinked, as some women do. She had a knowing way of knocking off the ashes, too; she took refuge in the maneuver now, for she was not quite sure yet of her self-control.

"You see," she observed, "it takes a fortnight to have anything cleaned; one couldn't do for two weeks without a conscience!"

Clement smiled in spite of himself. She was exquisite, sitting in the pale brocade chair, in her scarlet crêpe tea gown.

"I have thought this last fortnight that yours had gone to the cleaner's—or somewhere else," he said.

"That," said she, readily, "presupposes that I had one to send. When a thing is soiled past all cleaning it goes—not to the cleaner, but to the dust-bin. But why this magisterial air, Mr. Moorlake? What have I done?"

"What *have* you done? I wish *you* would tell me that," said Moorlake. He set down his cup and gave his undivided attention to her.

"Do you know," said she, breathing more freely now that the smoke veiled her face, "I have always thought that what art gained in you was a distinct loss to the Church! With you I always feel as if all seasons of the year were Lent."

"This is not the first time you have called me a prig, Mrs. Hilyer. I dare say you are right; but a man isn't best pleased to be thought ultra-good, strange as it may appear. I think you know that."

"Then he should do something to prove the contrary. Perhaps you have."

He smiled again at her audacity, but the smile was chill; she saw war in it.

"Is it your experience of men that they are too good?" he asked.

"Oh, I have known so many! All kinds," said Clarice. "All kinds, and yet all so much alike."

"You find man a wearisome study?"

"Not when he talks in enigmas, like you—" Then, quite abruptly: "Why do you wish I'd stayed the other day?"

"Because in my studio you would have been—" He paused.

"Yes? well? would have been—?"

"Safe."

There was a slight pause.

She looked at him with expanded eyes.

"Have I been in danger, then?" she asked; adding suddenly, with a delicious smile, "Is *everyone* safe in your studio, Mr. Moorlake?"

Clement blushed crimson.

She did not wait to hear his answer.

"Where is Oliver North?" she asked, quickly, with a splendid glow of courage.

"Where you have sent him!" he retorted, sharp and short. The answer burst out independent of his volition.

"Come!" said Clarice. "Good! The buttons are off at last! Which has pricked the other deepest?"

She laughed a little and began lighting another cigarette.

"Stop smoking!" said Clement. He stood up and came nearer—stood over her, towering. "Attend to me! I want the truth."

"An old want!" she smiled; "and such a vague one! Who knows the truth?"

"You know it!" he said, in a low, tense voice. "You know what you've done to injure an innocent woman. What did you say to North?"

Her heart quivered with fright, but she sat very still. She felt amid her fear a sort of exultation in his strength and beauty while he dominated her.

"Why do you think I said anything to North?" she asked, steadily.

"I know it," he said, shortly.

"What was it?"

"I refuse to tell."

"I insist."

"I refuse."

Moorlake was terrified by the sudden fury that swept through him. He dared not remain so near her; he took a turn up and down the little room. She sank back in her chair, pallid above her scarlet draperies. Fear, pride, love, desire, all fought within her. She loved torturing him, yet her heart was torn; it was hard to deny him.

In a few moments he mastered himself and returned to her.

"I beg your pardon," he said, with deadly coldness; "I was wrong. I will go."

He turned to leave her. In one spring she flung herself against him.

"Moorlake!" she half-sobbed.

"Don't go! I'll tell you! Don't go!"

She seized his hand in both her own.

"Clement!" she cried, "don't go!" She seemed incapable of any other words.

He looked down at her half in pity—the pity that a man feels for a woman when his passion does not answer hers—a pity on the border of contempt. But he was too kind to hurt any woman unnecessarily.

"Sit down," he said. "Compose yourself, and answer me one question. Don't speak now; take time."

In an agony of shame she hid her face in her hands. She was within a few inches of him, and she knew that the poles divided them.

He was the only man who had ever really mastered her; and she knew that for him she did not exist. In a moment he would get what he wanted and she would never see him again. She drew out the minute to its fullest extent. They had sunk to the sofa, he with unspoken scorn, as far from her as its limits allowed; she with her heart bounding, her temples beating, every feeling swallowed up in the one thought that she would lose him at the end of a minute. And the minute expired and another was born, and still she was silent, still she crouched, palpitating, with her face hidden. He was stern and pale; he would not relent. She dared not face him, for she felt, without seeing, the look in his face. The second minute slipped by, and then he spoke.

"What did you say to Oliver North?" he demanded, and his voice sounded like the tramp of doom.

There was no help for it; she had to speak.

"I only told him—" she whispered.

"Yes," he said, with forced patience.

"Yes; you told him—?"

"She was there." Her voice died away.

"Is that all?" he asked, still inexorable.

"Yes, all."

"Thank you," said Moorlake. He rose to go. She stretched out one hand to him; the other still hid her face.

"Is that all you want?" she asked, in a muffled voice.

Moorlake drew a deep breath.

"All," he said. "No, one thing more. Will you promise me not to injure *her*? She is an innocent woman."

Then at last she uncovered her face, and her eyes blazed at him.

"No! no!" she said. "I won't promise! She must take her chances, like other women."

His face hardened again.

"Think," he said, "if there were anything in your life you would wish to hide!"

She looked at him defiantly.

"There is no such thing," she said.

"Of course not," he assented. "I said, 'if there were.' I appealed to your imagination—that was all."

His cold words stung like hail.

He looked full at her and added, pointedly: "There *is* nothing, of course—nothing."

She grew restive under his eyes and changed color.

"Why should I go out of my way," she asked, uneasily, "to shield a woman who is not even a friend of mine?"

"Only because she is a woman—a woman who never injured you, and never would wish to injure anyone. Be magnanimous, as you can afford to be."

"You think," said Clarice, with a strange smile, "that I can't afford to be anything else?"

"You can afford to be anything you choose, but I know that you will choose to be only what is kind—and generous."

She flashed out, suddenly:

"I wonder if you would protect *me* like this, if *I* were in her power."

"Undoubtedly," said Moorlake.

"Why?" she asked, and waited with a strained face for the answer. It was very simple.

"Because," he said, "you are a woman."

Her muscles relaxed and she fell back listlessly.

"What a tragedy!" she murmured, "to be a woman!"

"Only for those who will have it so," said Moorlake. "Come," he added; "I have your promise?"

She thought she saw a gleam of humanity. After a moment's hesitation she said:

"I promise—but it is for you."

"For me or for her," he answered, "it is the same thing."

"You are one?" said Clarice, with a return of the old mockery.

"One in the desire not to suffer for a sin of which we are innocent," said Clement, gravely. "Thank you," he added, presently, and without another word left the room.

XII

It is a well-known fact that a crushed and sorrowing soul takes refuge in change of scene and, what is equally trite, carries its misery with it wherever it goes.

Althea's distaste for London grew and grew to such an extent that she could remain there no longer. She was now practically dependent on the Vincents. Her long and trying interviews with Oliver's solicitor had been unproductive. The man pitied her sincerely and wished to help her; but the machinery of the law is hard to set in motion and, like the mills of the gods, grinds slow. He promised to extort money from North if he could possibly do so; he disliked his client and respected Althea, and she knew that he would do his best.

There was no news of Violet; and what that meant to the mother only mothers can know.

Althea had a few fine jewels given her by her husband during the soon-chilled warmth of the honeymoon. These Bertie sold for her, and thus her immediate necessities were supplied.

Somehow or other some hint as to the condition of her affairs had got abroad. Mrs. Mellor, the devoted and insipid bride—a bride no longer—met her in the street and passed her without recognition, while a burning blush on the lovely Christmas-supplement face told Althea that the slight was intentional. The untempted virtuous woman cut the tempted virtuous one.

Another day, when Althea was sitting in Kensington Gardens under budding elms, Mrs. Banfrey, the actor's wife, came by. Althea prepared herself for another rebuff. But with all its faults the stage is not narrow-minded. Mrs. Banfrey stopped and seized her hand.

"My dear!" she exclaimed, "where have you kept yourself? What are you afraid of? We all like you; why don't you go about any more?"

Althea colored painfully, but she held the hand with gratitude; she

was mean-spirited enough to like pity.

"No one believes it," continued Mrs. Banfrey. She sat down and patted the hand she still held. "And if anyone did," she added, "the time for high moral indignation is over. Haven't other women had disagreeable husbands?—and haven't they liked other men better? It's quite natural; anybody who says it isn't is a sneak and a story-teller. Why don't you face the world? It'll be all right when you're married."

Althea pulled back her hand quickly.

"Married?" she repeated. "What do you mean?"

"Married to Moorlake. Of course, he will marry you?"

Mrs. Banfrey looked at her over her sable collar, with a handsome face full of frank friendliness. Althea turned cold.

"I don't understand you," she said, with painful agitation. "Mr. Moorlake is nothing to me—or I to him. I don't know what you've heard, but whatever it is, it is not true."

Mrs. Banfrey looked confused.

"Now you're angry," she said. "I'm so sorry. I didn't mean any harm. Even if it *were* true, you know, I should like you just as much—and I always liked you when we used to meet at Nellie's, though I never knew you well."

"Would *you* like it," asked Althea, almost fiercely, "if people told lies against your character?"

Mrs. Banfrey reflected a moment.

"No," she admitted. "I don't suppose I should. Perhaps they do; if they don't, it's because I'm absurdly, pitifully in love with my own husband, as a hundred other women are, worse luck!"

"I have not wronged my husband in any way," Althea burst out. "It is all the other way; but there is no use in talking about him." Her mouth trembled weakly.

"You poor dear!" said the actor's wife. "How *can* anyone be a brute to you! I almost wish it were true—that that icy piece of perfection would come to life and carry you off."

Althea could not answer this posthumous remark. Presently she said: "Mrs. Mellor cut me dead day before yesterday. I think she was cruel."

Mrs. Banfrey made an inarticulate sound expressive of disdain.

"That china image! She nearly killed Geoff that night at Nellie's. It really isn't fair of the Creator to make a thing so pretty and fill it only with clockwork. Why, Mrs. North, you have more soul in your little finger than she has brains in her head! The little barber's block!"

"She is happy," said Althea. "She has a husband who loves and protects her; she has never known temptation, and she can afford to trample on an unfortunate woman who has nothing."

Mrs. Banfrey looked at her curiously.

"And it isn't true," she said; "not any of it?"

Althea faced her gravely.

"What *is* true," she said, "is that I am a deserted wife, who has lost her child, and who has no lover. That is the truth; you may tell it to everyone who wants to know."

"My poor dear!" cried Mrs. Banfrey. "I believe you, every word, and I'll stand by you through everything. And as for Mrs. Mellor, she must pay for her boxes—after this! Geoff sha'n't give her any!"

Althea hurried home and into Nellie's arms. "Take me away," she said; "I can't bear it any more."

And so, without a word to Clement, they crossed the Channel.

XIII

BRITTANY in the Spring is a very fair substitute for England. The lanes are full of immense primroses; the fruit trees are loaded with bloom, for as yet no drought has browned the grass and withered the leaves. The keen sea breeze counteracts the unsanitary condition of the towns and disinfects the atmosphere of places

where drains are a name and good water a priceless boon.

The Vincents had found an old château, standing in a great garden near a little Breton village, not many kilometers from a certain fashionable town on the coast. There was a winding path through the beech woods which led to the shores of the Rance, that wide river which is really not a river, but a huge salt arm of the sea.

The château was a large, square, white stucco building three stories high, the third story formed by the gray slate roof. It was draped thickly with wistaria, Virginia creeper and roses white and yellow, which flowered riotously even in Spring in that sheltered spot. The salon and the dining-room were paneled in white wood. There were old portraits and ancient mirrors in tarnished frames on the walls. The furniture was stately and chipped and moth-eaten. The curtains were of white muslin, so often washed that they had become what the French call too "ripe" to bear washing again. The garden was a mass of bloom. The sundial was almost covered with roses. The borders of the pond were rich in ferns, the flower beds were edged with strawberries, and the paths lined with thickets of lilac, bay and box.

The life was ideally simple. The Vincents, who never wanted company when they had each other, were perfectly happy in this solitude. Bertie had his camera, his easel, his piano, his sailboat; Nellie tended the garden and learned new dishes from the cook, who wore a wonderful thin muslin Breton cap, full of inexplicable pins and streamers; took long walks in the flowering lanes, sailed on the Rance, drove sometimes to the neighboring town, where she had friends; made lace, wrote letters—and was quite contented.

With Althea it was different. Nature alone is not enough to banish sorrow. Solitude has often a corroding effect on a character already inclined to be morbid. Althea should have had company and distraction, but she was too sensitive in her pres-

ent anomalous position to desire them. Moorlake was silent; he, too, was waiting.

One day, when Althea was sitting in the blooming garden, where the keen, almost cold air contrasted with the wealth of flowers, the postman came, as usual. She had ceased to expect news from the outside world, and when the maid handed her a letter she took it with unfeigned lack of interest. It was a document in a long, legal-looking envelope, with American stamps on it, and the postmark was Sioux Falls, Dakota. She opened the cover and read the contents. It was long before she mastered them. When the meaning penetrated at last to her tortured understanding she rose and went to Nellie. Nellie, her constant refuge, was putting fresh roses into vases in the dining-room. Bertie was sitting in the corner, cleaning his palette.

"Nellie—Bertie—" said Althea, and for a moment could say no more. Her face was dreadful—suddenly sunken as if death had touched it.

Bertie sprang up, and Nellie put her arm round her. They saw the paper in her hand, and gently drew it away.

"Look!" she said; "it is come. Look!"

Vincent examined the paper. It was a formal announcement that on a certain date Oliver North had sued for a divorce and the case had "gone by default." It had been one of those monstrous and iniquitous mockeries of law which have become customary, and which the United States Government either cannot or will not put an end to.

"What does it mean, Bertie?" asked Althea. "I don't quite understand."

Vincent's face was very stern.

"It means," said he, "that North has had his revenge. He has divorced her," he added, to his wife.

"The brute!" cried Nellie.

"And my child?" said Althea.

There was silence for a moment; no one answered.

"I'm afraid he has the child," presently said Vincent.

Again weakness overcame Althea; she sank into a chair and hid her face. Nellie felt that she could offer no comfort just then. She went on mechanically handling the roses on the table. After a few moments, during which all three were silent, Althea looked up.

"This means," said Althea, "that I am free. Disgraced—and free."

"Free, but not disgraced," said Vincent, warmly. "There is not a creature in the world who believes you guilty."

Althea smiled sadly.

"Can I keep this a secret—for a time?" she asked. "I don't want . . ."

The Vincents had enough perception to fill in the pause. They knew that she was thinking of Moorlake.

"Will it be in the papers?" Althea went on.

"In the American ones, I suppose," said Nellie; "but people in London don't see them much."

"I will go away for a little," said Althea. "I want to think," and she left the room.

Her friends heard her slowly ascending the stairs. They looked at each other.

"Will he come?" asked Nellie, and Bertram only shook his head, like one in doubt.

A week after the arrival of the letter something occurred hardly less disquieting. One afternoon, when the Vincents were sailing on the Rance, Althea was wandering aimlessly in the garden. Exquisite nature was by degrees soothing her pain. It is hard to carry a sorrow under a blue sky amid roses. For a time, while the breeze blows and the flowers bloom and the sun shines, one must relax one's hold on trouble. It was so with Althea. Something of the sweet, impersonal charm of nature stole over her; her mind was grown accustomed to care, and to-day she bore it more lightly; it began to chafe her less.

The Breton maid came out under the trees, her snowy cap shining

white under the sun rays. She held a salver, and on it was a card.

"Mrs. Moorlake."

The utter unexpectedness of the name stopped Althea's blood for an instant.

It took but a moment to cross the grass and enter the house, but that moment was fraught with a dozen sensations. She would not give herself time to hesitate and grow timid. She went straight to the salon.

Mrs. Moorlake sat very upright in an old carved chair, one hand on its arm, the other holding a parasol. She rose as Mrs. North came in. Her gown was of black silk, made in a by-gone style, but she looked like a queen—the queen of fiction, not of real life. Eyes like Clement's fixed themselves on Althea, who forced herself to meet them. She felt that they were hostile.

Neither spoke for a few moments. The strain was manifestly disagreeable.

"I have not the honor of knowing you well," said Mrs. Moorlake at last. "You may wonder at my coming. I am at Dinard for a day or two, and I heard that you were here."

Althea looked at her with fascinated attention. Even the voice was like Clement's. An agony of longing rushed over her—longing to hear *his* voice, not the counterfeit, which brought only a sense of trouble, without consolation.

"Oh, you are at Dinard?" she said, hardly knowing what she said. "A pretty place, isn't it?"

"Pretty enough, but I don't like the natives," said the old lady, drily. "My mind is too much occupied with a rather painful subject—I cannot enjoy the beauties of Brittany, or of any other place, because of this pre-occupation—"

"I am sorry," said Althea, with colorless civility. She was bracing herself for what was coming.

"I will not apologize for my visit," went on Mrs. Moorlake.

"I am sure you never apologize for anything," said Althea, and was shocked to hear the enmity expressed in her tone.

The note of war had been sounded. Mrs. Moorlake's nostrils expanded—fine, sensitive nostrils like those of her son.

"I do not apologize for what I do," she said, "because I do nothing that I think wrong."

"That is certainly the way to be happy," observed Althea. Her courage had returned.

"I have never seen you, except once in my son's studio—I will not recall that unlucky day—but I fancy that you are a woman who will listen to reason."

"I have nothing else to listen to—when you speak," said Mrs. North, politely.

The elder woman eyed her narrowly.

"The present generation is trifling and satirical. They would manufacture smart phrases at the brink of the grave. It was not so with us. We knew how to be serious. I shall not make a long story. My son knows nothing of this visit. He is at home, and he does not think that I am near you. I heard only two days ago that your husband had divorced you. You must pardon my touching on this painful subject."

"Never apologize," said Althea, "when you are doing right."

"I have been," proceeded the old lady, "obliged to know what has happened between you and my son—not much, perhaps, but *too* much, certainly, judged by the standards of virtuous women. Clement is extremely chivalrous, fantastic even, in his dealings with the other sex. He and I differ. He considers man the aggressor. I, on the contrary, believe that women are responsible to the uttermost for whatever happens to them."

"Your views are extremely interesting," said Althea, who was very pale, "but I fail to see why you made this long, dusty journey for the purpose of declaring them to a stranger." She spoke without a shadow of insolence, but her words nettled the other woman.

"Because I have more than the

declaration of my views to make. I think it highly probable that my son, with his overstrained sense of honor, may ask you to marry him. You must see that, for several reasons, this must not be."

"I should like to hear the reasons."

"You shall; that is only fair. First of all I do not recognize divorce—the Church does not, either. In any case, your divorce is one of those fraudulent ones obtainable only in America. You cannot marry again, legally—at least, not in England. Is not that reason enough?"

"If there are more reasons I should like to hear them."

The old lady looked at Althea with a certain softening of countenance. She loved courage, and admired that of her victim.

"There is nothing," she said, "so near my heart as my boy. He is all I have. He is the best man God ever made, and what he is to me I can't even try to express. He is a great sculptor; everyone recognizes that. He is on the eve of being made an R.A. If he marries a divorced woman he will be ruined."

She paused and looked anxiously for Althea's reply. Suddenly Althea broke out into a peal of laughter—laughter scarcely sane.

Mrs. Moorlake was appalled.

"You laugh!" she cried, disgusted.

"I laugh!" said Althea, wiping her eyes, and smiling like a mad woman. "Why shouldn't I? I am ruined, penniless, disgraced—without husband, child or lover—and all this might be remedied if you hadn't set your heart on your son being an R.A.! Oh, it's funny! funny!" and she laughed again, while the tears trickled over her wan face.

Mrs. Moorlake saw that she was on the verge of hysterics, and was alarmed. She produced a little flask of lavender salts and offered it to Althea.

"You have been tried too far," said Mrs. Moorlake, kindly.

"Don't mind it," said Althea, more calmly. "Everyone insults me, ex-

cept the Vincents. I am used to it, only—only— Oh, have you no sense of proportion? Is the Royal Academy heaven? I know R.A.'s who are not angels. Would you rather have your son an R.A. than an honest man?"

Mrs. Moorlake kept her temper.

"Try to be calm," she said. "Let us put the Royal Academy out of the question, put aside my natural pride in my boy, and think of the other reasons. In order to marry you Clement would be obliged to expatriate himself. You and he could not live in England."

Althea's sobs and smiles ceased. She was once more pale and composed.

"My dear lady," she said, "your reasons are good, but I have one that is better. You take it for granted that I want to marry your son. Nothing on earth would induce me to do so. Your son does not love me."

Mrs. Moorlake sank back in her chair. Surprise was pictured in her face.

"You know that?" she cried, and her black lace draperies trembled with her movement. "I never would have said it to you; I am not cruel enough."

"There was very little that you did not say," said Althea. "You need not have spared me that. I have never had the slightest wish to marry your son. I repeat, nothing on earth could persuade me to do so."

The mother drew a long sigh of relief.

"My dear Mrs. North," she said, "you make me very happy."

"Thank you," said Althea; "that is for me a great privilege."

"You feel bitter toward me, I'm afraid; but I assure you that personally I have nothing whatever against you."

"You are very kind; but while we are in the Palace of Truth let me tell you that I very much resent what you have done. The question was one that only Mr. Moorlake and I could decide. You came here without warning, with a face like a hanging judge,

to dictate to me. If I had wished to marry your son, do you think I should have hidden myself here and concealed my address?"

"Clement knows your address."

"He is as indifferent to me as—I am to him." Althea stumbled in these words. She was by nature a truth-teller. "We have been," she went on, "involved in a net of terrible circumstances. We must try to forget—to live them down—that is all."

"I am sorry for you, Mrs. North, and I respect you," said Mrs. Moorlake. She rose somewhat stiffly from her chair.

"Never apologize," said Althea, smiling.

"You turn my words against me," said the old lady. "May I ask you one favor? Do not tell Clement that you have seen me."

"I have no communication with Mr. Moorlake. I trust you not to mention my name to him."

Mrs. Moorlake extended her hand. Althea ignored it and walked toward the door.

"You have a carriage, of course?" she asked. She touched a bell, and the Bretonne appeared.

"Good-bye," said Mrs. Moorlake. There was a red flush on her cheeks. Althea stood on the doorstep and watched the carriage drive away.

When Bertie and Nellie returned they found her quite composed. She told Nellie of Mrs. Moorlake's visit.

"It has done me good," she said. "She made me feel raving at first, but afterward I realized . . ." Her voice died away and she looked out of the great window by which they were sitting.

"Realized what?" asked Nellie, softly.

"How impossible it all is. I think I had had a sort of unacknowledged hope, or rather wish, before. That old lady put it all so clearly to me, Nellie. I saw it all—Clement the cold, respectable candidate for the Royal Academy, and poor me, nobody in particular, weighed down by an ugly scandal, living on charity. You see

it wouldn't do—even if he loved me . . . I mean to be very different after this. I intend to be done with sighing and crying and making demands on your sympathies. I am not old and I am not wicked. My sin is that I have suffered and suffered till I couldn't bear the pain any more, and now I am punished for having been patient so long. You know, when people in the old days were crucified and took too much time dying, they had their bones broken. Well, I feel like that; all my tortures haven't killed me, but my bones are broken. Mrs. Moorlake smashed a few to-day—her son broke some before I left England. But I'm going to knit them together somehow, and stand up and face people. Oliver North is the sinner, not I. People will find that out some day."

Althea's words were feverish, but not her manner. Nellie gazed at her in surprise.

"I think," she said, with some heat, "that that old woman deserves to be shut up. It was intolerable of her to come."

"She came because she loved Clement; and I resented it because I loved Clement. That fact can't be mended. I must face it." She was silent for a few moments, staring out into the dusky garden. Then she went on: "Nellie, do you believe in God?"

"Of course," said Mrs. Vincent, startled. "Don't you?"

"Yes, I do; but I can't understand anything. I have prayed and prayed and prayed, asking to be set free."

"And you have been."

"Yes, but in what a way! I can't help thinking all the time that there must be one man on earth who would have loved me. He might be poor, and not handsome; but if he had only just loved me . . . It is awful to have all that taken out of one's life so young! For I am young for my age—like a child who feels that she has a right to be happy, and yet can't be. I have tried so hard to find out why Oliver was so cruel and so indifferent, why he always left me, why he seemed to feel no responsibility

toward me; and I don't know why. It's all a puzzle."

After a pause Nellie said: "There is one thing for which I think you should be prepared. I believe that Clement is coming here."

Althea turned a shade paler in the dusk. "Why? Why do you say that?"

"I don't know, but I feel sure of it. Bertie thinks so, too."

"Don't let him come! Oh, don't let him!"

"Suppose he were to ask you to marry him—to insist on it?"

"I should refuse."

"It is easy to say so now—here; but suppose he were in this room, beside you—near, near—with his hand in yours. Could you refuse?"

Althea sprang up with a little cry.

"You are cruel!" she exclaimed.

"I will not see him."

She walked restlessly to the other window. The maid came in with the lamps, and the mellow glow showed Althea with white face and wide, scared eyes. When they were alone again she came to Nellie.

"If you let him come I'll never forgive you!" she said. "It would be too degrading! He will ask me from a sense of honor to marry him—and I shall refuse. And he will go away again, and everything will be worse than ever. Don't let him come!"

Nellie sighed.

"I know I'm killing you," continued Althea, "but there will be a change. I *will* be different, I swear it. I shall begin to-morrow."

Bertie came in, dressed for dinner. Althea went up to him and laid her hand on his arm.

"I'm going to stop teasing you, Bertie," she said. "I'm going to be a nursery governess or something. I want you to tell me how to begin. I want to earn my living."

"All right," said Vincent, with his usual careless, pleasant manner. "Begin by governessing me. There are lots of things I need done for me. Nellie neglects me shamefully." The look he cast on his wife made Althea's eyes fill.

"I'll do anything you like—and I want to go sailing and I want to see Dinard. I've been getting into bad ways lately—I'm lazy and out of sorts, but I mean now to be energetic."

"Quite right," said Bertie. "Come along and energetically eat. '*Madame est servie*,' and I saw a thundering big lobster in the *garde-manger* this afternoon."

He held out his arm to Althea and took her in to dinner. She was gay and talkative, as they had not seen her for a year; but Bertie noticed, the observation of the artist quickened by affection, how fragile and pinched her face looked above the soft lace of her tea gown.

As they rose from the table the postman arrived and the letters were brought in. There was one for Althea.

It contained merely these words:

The day after you receive this I shall be with you. I do not ask permission for fear you may withhold it; but you must be kind and let me see you.

CLEMENT MOORLAKE.

XIV

WHAT Althea most craved and most dreaded had come to pass. She finished the evening creditably, having betrayed nothing. Bertie also had received a letter from Moorlake by the same post, and was concealing the fact from Althea. He felt nervous and uncomfortable, finding himself in the midst of an affair that promised to be eminently unsatisfactory to everyone concerned in it.

Althea thought that Nellie kissed her that night with a deeper, more yearning tenderness than usual—happy Nellie, whose marriage was one of the few perfect ones. Each knew the thoughts of the other, but had learned during the past months to economize their emotions and save themselves as much nervous wear and tear as possible.

When Althea was alone she gave herself no time for thought. Every

time that she began thinking of Moorlake she instantly thought of something else; the more trivial the subject the better it answered the purpose. As she lay in the old paneled room, in the dark, she tried to summon up landscapes she had seen, tunes she had heard; she even recited poems in her mind. There was one stanza of "Come into the garden, Maud," which she could never get right the first time, and by constant mental repetition she managed not to hear—or to pretend not to hear—the voice of her subjective mind, which constantly whispered: "Clement is coming to-morrow—what will you say to Clement?" Hers was a brain that worked very much like a squirrel in a cage—or rather the brain was the cage and the squirrel was the dominating idea that never was still. It toiled with agonizing effort round and round, round and round, and never got any further. To lie in the dark all alone with that in one's head is worse than a nightmare; the process is practically endless, and has nothing of the sharp crisis of a bad dream, from which one must wake.

Althea clutched her pillow and strained every fibre in her quest of diversion. Scene after scene rose before her mind with the distinctness given by overwrought nerves. Often the face of Violet came, and it was so terrible to her that she hastened to think of something—anything—else. She found herself trying to count her clothes and calculate what a Summer wardrobe would cost; then suddenly she would repeat the names of the Cæsars, making a mistake and going back to rectify it. The strain was growing intolerable, when mercifully the tired mind gave way and she fell asleep.

The first hint of morning roused her. She came to herself in a moment with the curious instantaneous impression that there was someone in the room. But it was empty of all bodily presence but hers. She rose in the nipping chill of the early morning, threw open the blinds and looked out. It was the solemn, the terrible

hour of dawn—dawn, when sins and sorrows loom large and near, and heaven and hope seem very far away. The garden was dim and chaotic, with clumps of deeper darkness blotting a sombre background. The trees were still and terrible, just discernible against a sky only less black than they.

Who that is without God and hope can bear to watch the dawn? It is the hour when the heart cries out, shuddering for some voice, some promise, to tell us that life with its struggles is not all in vain.

The neutral tints became pale, the sky cleared and trembled with a faint luminousness, the shrubs and bushes turned green. Presently the garden gave a hint of color, of heaps of pink and red and yellow roses, of masses of young lilac and golden laburnum. The birds twittered and chirped and whistled; the air was resonant with melodic flutings. The sky grew blue, the sunbeams shot up, and the flowers were no longer delicate-hued ghosts; the world was a mass of color, a riot of music, and day had come.

The silent watcher crept back to her pillow, and this time to unbroken sleep.

The inhabitants of the château drank their morning coffee in retirement, a breakfast table being a thing abhorrent to all three. Althea slipped out of the house unobserved and spent the morning in the beech woods on the edge of the Rance. She began to understand the feelings of a man condemned to be executed; every moment of delay must, she thought, make death seem harder. A few minutes before midday she strolled back to the house.

Standing by the rose-embraced sundial were the Vincents and Clement Moorlake. Much to her own surprise, Althea felt no immediate sensation at sight of him. They shook hands very quietly, she without looking at him. The human heart can hold only a certain amount of joy or suffering in the twenty-four hours, and Althea's power of feeling was, for the time being, exhausted.

"This is an uncereemonious hour for calling," said Moorlake, "but I was impatient to see you all."

"Clement came *via* Paris," explained Nellie, who looked far more unhappy than Althea. "The train arrives very early, you know."

"This is a difficult place to get to," said Clement. "All roads are equally disagreeable."

He was looking at Althea; she felt the glance, though she was trying to pretend, like a child, that he was somebody else. She dared not let the full sense of his presence sink into her consciousness. Yet she seemed to know without seeing that he was worn and tired, that there was an accentuation of that aspect of delicacy which accorded so ill with his great muscular strength.

Nellie noticed how colorless his clear, fine skin had grown and how much grayer was his hair at the temples. He, too, she thought, had no doubt had his battles to fight!

"My mother is at Dinard," said Moorlake. "I saw her a few minutes this morning—met her accidentally, in fact. I did not know she was there; I thought she was at Dinan."

"They are very close together, you know," said Althea. She forced her eyes to meet Clement's, and saw a question in them. He was mentally asking, "Have you seen her?"

"Come to breakfast," said Bertie, who had been loitering about examining the roses. "Looks like June, doesn't it?" he added, turning to Clement.

"A lovely climate, apparently," said Moorlake. "I always wonder when I am on the Continent why we live in England."

"And I," said Nellie, as she led the way to the breakfast-room, "always wonder why we ever leave it. Even the costermongers seem nice to me after the Latin races."

"Don't be rude, Nellie," said Moorlake. "Remember that my grand-mamma was an Italian."

"That's the only thing about you that's not nice; it suggests stilettos and vendettas."

"To an American it suggests peanuts and cheap ice cream, grind-organs and monkeys," said Althea, and she went on in this vein as if she were entertaining a man she had never met before.

Clement, after his racking night in the train, was downright hungry, and unaffectedly enjoyed his breakfast, eaten from Quimper plates with big fleurs-de-lis on them in two shades of blue. Althea thought bitterly how strange it was that men could nearly always eat. She herself pretended, and talked fast enough to cover the pretense.

It had been part of her plan of self-immolation to take no extraordinary trouble in dressing herself that day. She had on a well-worn dark blue coat and skirt and a simple mauve silk blouse. Air and excitement had given her a color of unusual brilliancy; sorrow had a little sharpened features already delicate; nothing could spoil the lovely mass of warm-tinted hair that owed all its beauty to nature. Bertie and Nellie looked at her anxiously, and thought she had never appeared more charming. To them she was lovely and lovable; why could not their friend see her with their eyes? After breakfast they all sat in the garden, with their coffee and cigarettes, in a spot made genially warm by the sunshine.

First Bertie made some flimsy excuse and drifted away; Nellie talked on bravely, but in a few minutes Bertie called to her, "Come, look at this rosebush! It's really extraordinary," and she followed him.

Clement smiled; even at that moment, which he felt to be one of the most important in his existence, the transparent pretext amused him. Althea did not look at him. She was wrapping about her more closely a light scarf she wore as protection against the Spring wind. There was only a minute of silence. Then Moorlake said, bluntly:

"Have you seen my mother?"

The suddenness of the question startled Althea; and he saw that she was embarrassed.

"Are you under oath not to divulge her visit?" asked Clement, "for I feel sure that she has been here."

"I have taken no oaths," said Althea. "I never will. I think they are unwise and dangerous."

"No vows, either?" he asked, with a curious light in his eyes which she had never seen there, which made her realize that Moorlake, without his rigid sense of duty, might be a very dangerous man who would enjoy being dangerous.

"Nor vows, either," she said, firmly.

"Perhaps I shall induce you to break your vow not to make vows," he said, with a deep, liquid note in his usually cold voice.

At that moment he felt very human; the past seemed less alive than usual, and the future more vaguely desirable.

Althea felt the change in his mood, and steeled herself against it.

"I don't think your mother made me promise anything," she said.

"Then she was here?"

"Yes; since I am truthful, I must say she was."

"With what object?"

Clement had thrown away his cigarette and was bending toward her. Intense interest shone in his eyes.

Althea hesitated a moment, then said, bravely:

"In the interests of her son."

"In what her son would call his interests?"

"I think so—in the long run."

"But not just now?"

"Yes, perhaps just now, too."

"I don't believe it," said Clement, decidedly. "But why must we talk in enigmas? Are we strangers?"

"Yes," said Althea. "I think we are." Then, after a perceptible pause, "I think we always shall be."

"Why don't you trust me?" he asked, impetuously. "Why won't you help me? You know why I have come."

"You came to see us—the Vincents and me—because you needed a change. Let it rest there."

He looked at her with astonishment.

"Do you think that I came all this distance to hear you give such an order as that?—or to obey it?"

Althea shivered a little.

"It is too cold here. Shall we go into the house?" she asked, rising.

"Certainly," he said, also rising, "if we can be alone."

They walked toward the château in silence. He felt curiously piqued and eager for one intimate word or look. It seemed as if their positions had suddenly been reversed. He knew Althea so little that he believed for a moment her manner of dealing with him was dictated by coquetry; but one look at her pale face and compressed mouth undeceived him.

They reached the salon unremarked. Moorlake shut the door and stood waiting for her to sit down. When both were seated, he said: "It is not kind of you to keep me at arm's length."

To this she had nothing to answer.

"Surely," he said, "we have much to say to each other. You may feel a natural resentment because I have involved you in so much unhappiness, but in spite of that you must know that I am your best friend—that at least I want to be—"

"Please," she interrupted, "don't speak of the past! It is more than I can bear."

"Then let me speak of the future—that in which I beg to have a share. Tell me what my mother said to you. She has somehow turned you against me."

"Your mother loves you more than anyone does—at least in a more unselfish way—" she hesitated and colored, then went on: "You know what you are to her, how she builds on your future—your career. You still have a long life before you—"

"I am forty years old," said Clement. "If I have done nothing so far, I shall never do or be anything."

"But you have done something. You are a great sculptor; everyone says so."

"You mean my mother says so." He made the amendment smiling.

"You are going to be an R. A.," she said, also smiling, but with some bitterness. "If you do nothing wrong or bohemian or uncanonical you are going to be one of the Forty."

A sudden illumination came into his face.

"*That* is what my mother said to you!" he exclaimed. "I understand." He looked both amused and vexed. Loyalty and annoyance struggled within him.

"You must forgive her, Althea." She winced at the sweetness of hearing him pronounce her name. "Remember that she is the one person to whom I am a heaven-born genius. She has lived only for me all these years, while I have been making statues until I've almost become a statue myself. A hard medium of expression—and you hate sculpture; you told me so when we first met."

Althea breathed freely. He was unbending, he was becoming a human being with whom she might talk humanly, who could in time, perhaps, open his soul to her—that part of it at least which did not contain the mysterious Other Woman.

"Do you know," she said, impulsively, leaning forward, "now, for the first time in ever so long, I feel that we are friends! I am so glad, because I had come to feel a sort of terror of you, as of something strange and unreal and icy! The thought of you was dreadful to me."

"My poor child!" he said. "I have been but a bad friend to you. But I will atone—if you will let me."

They were not far apart. He stretched out his hand—warm, appealing, consolatory—and gently took her cold one.

She made a quick movement.

"Oh, please don't touch me!" she cried, with a sharp accent of pain.

In a moment he understood her—how she was bracing herself to withstand him, steeling her heart against him, fighting down her love for him, smothering and crushing the passionate craving for his affection which

had well-nigh killed her during all the time of her great trouble. And once again, as so often before, he longed to give her his whole heart and life and soul without reservation.

"Have I been presumptuous?" he said, softly, still lightly holding her hand. "Won't you give me the right to care for you? You are free now, Althea."

"No, Clement, I shall never be free," she said, with passionate sadness. "I am a dishonored woman; all the venal laws in America cannot make me free. Nothing can right me now—not even if there were a man who loved me."

"If, Althea? There is no 'if.' There is a man who loves you, who will try to make up to you for what you have lost."

"Ah, Clement, don't tempt me! A woman who loves as I do is easily tempted! But she is not easily satisfied. Even if I were really free, I would never, never—" She paused in distress before the word.

"Never marry me, Althea? why?" he asked.

"There are so many good reasons—so many, and you know them all," she said.

"You are thinking about the legality of it, aren't you? We could go away—we need not live in England, where people are old-fashioned and narrow-minded. Is a woman, an innocent, unhappy woman, to go solitary all her days because a brute has deserted her? That reason is soon disposed of."

"There is another reason, Clement," she said, in a low tone. "I need not remind you of it."

He stiffened suddenly. "You mean," he said, "the other—because—"

"Because you do not love me."

She spoke very firmly and with immeasurable sadness.

He paused and looked at her squarely. "Althea, it is five years since I saw the person of whom you are thinking. She has been married for some time."

"But you love her, Clement, and only her. You have never deceived me. How could I care for you as I do if you had? You would not be the man I love if you could lie to me."

He was confounded and knew not what to answer.

"Do you think," she said, with suppressed passion, "that I could be your wife and know that your heart and soul belong to that other woman? Could I take your kind pity for me—your liking, even your affection—when what you and I know to be *love* is wanting? I *could* not share you with another woman, Clement! Better that you should be as unattainable as the stars! I could still think of you—still love you as the worthiest man I have ever known—but marry you, no! Ah, no, it would be terrible! I believe you know—I know now—that there is no middle course, no happiness in being second best."

Clement was still silent. This last revelation of Althea's character showed him what she was—what sort of woman he might have loved if the phantom of the past had not been between them.

"This must be the end—really the end," she went on. "We must not meet any more. I do not say that I shall try to forget you, for the memory of you will be my dearest possession; but I shall try to avoid ever seeing you again. I don't think I even want your picture—I could not bear it. I have hurt you, troubled you dreadfully in dragging you into my pitiful life, where you should never have come; but you forgive me—I know you do."

Her wide, pleading eyes gazed straight into his. He sat in a tense, strained attitude, with the look she had learned to know so well—his brows bent, his dark eyes—like those of no other man—shining with strange lights.

"Never speak of forgiveness, Althea," he said. "My one wish is to atone—to make reparation—to bring you some happiness, if you will only let me. Althea, I swear that I love you! You are the only woman I

would marry. Will you not risk it? Who could help loving you? I never knew you till to-day, and I know that no man could be indifferent to you."

A sudden wave of hope passed over her; her body tingled with the glow of leaping blood.

"Clement!" she said, "if you can tell me on your honor that I am dearer to you than the other woman . . ."

His face changed. He stood up and walked to the window. She sat with her hands clenched, waiting. The birds sang in the garden. All life—its pain, its joy, its hope, its disappointment—was in that minute while the birds sang. To the man at the window death would have been less bitter. When he turned Althea knew that the hope and the joy were over, that only the pain and the disappointment were left.

"I know the answer," she said, very gently. "Don't grieve over it, Clement; it is better so."

Moorlake was a strong man; he had never cried in his life, but his heart wept then.

XV

MOORLAKE returned to London, but one sunny morning in early August found him on the beach at Dinard. He could hardly have explained why he was there. He was subject once in every few years to fits of atrophied will—periods of involution during which half of his nature hurried him into actions deeply condemned by the other half. And at one of these times he came to Dinard.

He had heard nothing from the Vincents or from Althea. Life seemed perfectly tasteless and uninteresting. He felt the lassitude left by a long, hot London season, in which his part had been played even more perfunctorily than usual. But much of his sadness, which was chronic and constitutional, was temporarily banished by the scene about him.

It was the hour when the smart world of Dinard is wont to plunge into the gentle waves and wash away

some of the weariness caused by all-night baccarat, prefaced by dancing. Many bathed, but more looked on. The sands, clean and glittering, were covered with chairs, the chairs with lovely ladies, and the lovely ladies with fresh, light gowns. There were very few painted faces and dyed heads; even the most charming had that seal of respectability which in the eyes of the well-conducted adds a charm to beauty. There was the usual sprinkling of rackets August visitors who change Dinard from a staid residential town, conquered by Anglo-Saxons, into a vortex of baccarat, cocktails, flirtations, picnics and balls. Then it is that men have been known to drink yellow chartreuse out of wine glasses at the club in the morning, and mothers of families sit with greedy eyes fixed on the "little horses" as they run along, winning—for the bank. Then it is that there is time for nothing but enjoyment—when one sits of an afternoon opposite the Casino, at the pastry cook's—where the cakes are guaranteed to add a stone to one's weight in six weeks—when one curses, if one is an Anglo-Saxon, between sips of Ceylon tea, the truly Gallic cruelty of the stupid Breton *cochers* who congregate in that quarter—a vile blot on the loveliness of the place.

There is an amusement for every hour and for every minute a fresh subject of gossip—dear, delightful, diverting gossip—which leaves "not even Lancelot brave, nor Galahad clean."

Moorlake's sober face was out of place on the *plage*, and many a woman thought how pleasant it would be to call a smile to it. The morning was made for happiness; it was neither cold nor hot; the air was light and exhilarating, with a tang of salt in its softness.

Clement saw a chair standing somewhat apart from the others, and appropriated it. There were a good many people in the water, but none wore the extraordinary costumes in vogue at other French watering places. Few dresses were coquettish, or even

becoming. Presently a tall figure waded ashore. It was a woman who had been swimming. She was dressed in pale blue, and her head was covered by a blue silk handkerchief with great ends standing up on top. She was accompanied by several men, and passed quite close to Moorlake on the way to her cabin. For an instant he saw her in profile, and was conscious of a sudden shock. He turned and watched her retreating figure—a very good one, even in its undisguised state. He saw her enter the cabin, after a few chaffing words with her escort at the door; noted the number, and sat for three-quarters of an hour facing it, waiting for her to come out.

At last, after several excursions of her maid, fetching and carrying between the cabin and some unknown point, the lady opened the door, put out a well-shod foot, and stepped forth on the beach. No wonder it had taken forty-five minutes to make her what she was. She was dressed in the fashion of the day-after-to-morrow—for which she did not mean to pay till the day after that. To look at her was to realize the actual existence of all those mysterious French words found even in the least French of fashion papers—*tabliers*, *appliqué*, *revers*—to say nothing of incrustations, pipings, accordeon pleatings and other things to be found in England. The gown was a marvelous collection of materials, so cunningly constructed that a man who was not in the business would have called it "simple," thus proving himself the same. The figure inside the gown was all that comparative youth, conscientious exercise and four-guinea stays could make it. The lady's hat was a wide-brimmed "confection" of big pink roses, with yards of tulle that did wonderful things all round them, and finally wound itself about the wearer's throat. The face under the hat was charmingly tinted—by what did not yet appear—and had straight features and hard blue eyes. The hair was the color of gilt, with even waves that looked as if they were cut out of brass, from the nape of the

long neck to the place where they met the back of the hat.

Moorlake sat on his chair and looked at the lady. He could not have catalogued her like the cold narrator. He only knew that she was the woman he had loved for fifteen years.

She came over the sands directly toward him. He rose.

"I can't be mistaken," she began, in a hard, clear voice; "you are surely Clement Moorlake?"

"Yes," he admitted, "I am."

"You don't know me? It is so long since we met. To think of your being here! It's delightful. Do you know me?"

She smiled as she asked the question.

Moorlake paused before answering. He was visibly disturbed.

"You must be—I am sure you are—Lady Bembridge."

"I am Hyacinth to you, Clement, or 'Cinthy,' it used to be, didn't it?" She laughed lightly.

Moorlake winced. "That was a long time ago," he said, stiffly.

"But how well you wear! No dye, no make-up! That gray above the temples is the finishing touch to your fascination. Don't you remember, I always told you that you would grow handsomer with age? I was a true prophet."

Lady Bembridge regarded him with undisguised interest. Clement looked squarely into her hard eyes.

"Is Lord Bembridge here?" he asked.

"Oh, how like you!" cried Hyacinth. "First of all the proprieties! You have changed as little as your face. No, Bembridge is not here. We are like the little couple who foretell the weather—never seen together," and she laughed again. "We do not pose any more. Now ask me if I have any children."

"Have you?" and Clement managed to smile a little.

"None; it's a disappointment to my husband, as he hates the next heir, but I don't approve of them. Children spoil a woman's career."

"That depends on what sort of career it is."

"Mine is a sort of 'Rake's Progress.' Don't look shocked—only ugly men should ever look shocked, for then nobody would mind them. It's quite true, Clement. I have every vice except stinginess. How are you getting on? Still doing those great, lumpy statues? Have you made a fortune? If you have you must lend me something, for I ruined myself last night at the Casino."

"My letter of credit is at your disposal," said Moorlake, gravely.

"How solemn you are! It is really too nice to see you again! Where are you stopping?"

Moorlake named his hotel.

"I am breakfasting at the Terrasses, and doing things all day; but you must come to the Casino to-night, won't you?"

"I neither dance nor gamble."

"No, but you can talk—and listen. Do come! I want to see you so much!"

"Is it really *pleasant* to you to see me?"

"Of course! Why not? One outlives everything—except one's appetite. I *am* so hungry! Oh, there's Dolkovski at last. You're late, Prince. The Marchants eat at half-past twelve."

One of the escort had approached, a big Russian with a Romanoff look about him.

"They will not eat at that time to-day," he observed, with a heavy smile.

Then he looked at Clement disapprovingly.

"This is an old friend, Mr. Moorlake. But he doesn't like Russian princes. He reads Ouida, and knows they are all desperate characters. Come along, Dolly. To-night, Clement, about nine-thirty," and she walked away with her prince.

The day passed to Moorlake like a confused dream. He tried to join the new revelation to the old conception. A disease of fifteen years' standing is not to be cured by one dose of medicine, no matter how strong the drug

may be. He shrank from a repetition of the dose, but he knew that he must swallow it. And so, after hours of walking, with unseeing eyes fixed on the fine landscape, he returned to dress, dine and meet Hyacinth Bembridge at the Casino.

It was easy to distinguish her among the other women; her superior stature and the pronounced style of her gown attracted everyone's attention. She glittered from throat to feet with steel sequins, and round her neck, looped up to her breast with diamonds and falling loose again, was a rope of great pearls. There was a group of men about her, but no women. One man was a French count—the sort of thing France makes badly since the Republic—a weak, stooping, livid young creature with a preposterous nose, no chin to speak of, and a red orchid in his coat. Another was a clean-limbed, well-washed Englishman, who could not go back to England owing to pecuniary misunderstandings. A third was an elderly man with a magenta face and a bottle-nose—one of the props of the charreux industry—and the fourth was the Russian prince.

Moorlake hesitated a moment, then walked up to the group and bowed to Lady Bembridge.

"Oh, you did come! So glad. Come outside; it's stuffy here. Go and dance, Dolly! Madame de Ternon is looking for you."

The Russian glowered, and the little Count sighed as he surveyed Moorlake's inches.

"*Ces anglais, ces anglais!*" he murmured.

"You should make them get out," said Dolkovski, sulkily. "They think they own the place."

"*Mon cher, I am English!*" observed the magenta man, reprovingly.

"*Pardon!* I forgot. You don't look it," retorted the Prince, with double spite.

"And I," said the other Englishman.

"Ah, but one doesn't think of you as an Englishman; you can't stand the climate!"

Hyacinth drew Moorlake toward the unlighted end of the veranda. The moon was full and the tide so high that a short time before it had dashed against the stones at the base of the Casino.

"This is the flirtation corner," said Hyacinth, "but as you don't know how to flirt, it's wasted on you. I'm glad there's a moon, for people will see you, and I shall like them to. I'm awfully tired of the men, particularly Dolkovski. He's not amusing."

She leaned back in her chair, glittering like a moonbeam, fingering her pearls.

"Aren't these nice!" she went on. "I have wanted them for years. One would do anything for a rope of pearls! Solomon, who knew so much, said that the price of a virtuous woman was *above* rubies; you see, he meant pearls!"

"A new interpretation of Scripture," said Moorlake, drily. He was mentally trying to peel away this present picture of her, as one might scrape a palimpsest to get a glimpse at the old meaning beneath the accretions of time.

"How do you like Dinard?" Hyacinth rattled on. "They say Zola is coming to write up the smells. I felt inspired to-night as I came along the street to make a poem called 'Moonlight on the Drain.' Wouldn't it be a choice subject? You see the French hate us, and try to kill us with drains—or want of them. But we come, all the same, and bring Condy's Fluid. Isn't it pretty here?"

Clement thought her ill at ease, in spite of her hard eyes.

"Which question must I answer first?"

"Don't be so serious. Tell me about yourself."

"I am more serious than ever when I talk about myself, and I dislike doing it."

"How little changed you are!"

For the first time her voice was free from mockery, and she sighed.

"I am more changed than I thought or knew," he said.

"How solemn your eyes are,

Clement! I believe it was those eyes that frightened me away. . . . Sometimes I think I should like to pretend that we are young again, and that we love each other."

"That I love you," he corrected. "You never cared for me."

"Yes, I did—in a way. I loved your beauty and your strength. Do you remember when you stopped my horse that was running away, and saved my life—for this?"

She shivered a little and drew her violet chiffon wrap about her. The gesture recalled that of Althea months before in the garden, and the thought of Althea struck warm on his heart.

"Why did you promise to marry me, Hyacinth, and then try to break my heart?" he asked.

"Why? Who knows? Why do I do anything? My life is a series of question marks, and I haven't been able to find the answers. But I think you were too good—not only better than I deserved, but too good to please me long."

"The old story—I was a prig! I suppose men all the world over who try to behave like gentlemen are called prigs."

"There are so few, Clement! Since I broke with you I have hardly known a man whom you would call a gentleman."

"Not one in fifteen years? Poor thing!"

"What is your definition of a gentleman, Clement? Opinions vary so."

Moorlake was silent for a moment.

"A man," he said, presently, "who tells the truth and never takes advantage of a woman."

"And yet, Clement, do you remember our one meeting in fifteen years—in Rome? You tried to make love to me then." She leaned forward, with the broad moonlight softening her eyes.

Moorlake flushed deeply.

"Hyacinth," he said, "I've been five years doing penance. I swore then that there should be no women in my life."

"And you have kept your vow?"

He was silent.

"You are sure you've made no one unhappy? . . . No answer? Never mind; don't tell me. You aim too high. You see, I am contented with very small triumphs in the realm of aspiration."

"Don't be so bitter about yourself," he said. "It hurts me to hear it. Why do you lead this life of which you complain?"

"Because I love excitement, because I must have money."

He glanced instinctively at the pearls she was fingering.

"Ah, those," she said, "were a present. I have nothing to live for except amusement, and I don't believe in a future life—so why pretend? I am hopelessly estranged from Bembridge. We seldom meet. Life without movement, amusement, pretty gowns and pleasant places and nice things to eat would be worse than death to me."

"And the other things for which women care—honest love, a good name, respect and consideration in society?"

"Are deadly dull and awfully overrated. I am going away from this place. There are lots of the virtuous, hardworking, painstaking matrons whom you admire, here, and they look askance at me. Not all, for I'm still a countess! but there are enough shocked faces to annoy me. I shall go to some place where the people are all French. After all, they are the only ones who can cook and who know how to wear their clothes, and I shall be happy."

Moorlake was pale with disgust.

"Happy?" he repeated.

"Well, gay! That's the nearest approach to happiness."

There was a long silence. The sound of the waltz drifted out, and stray couples came up to the corner, then, seeing Hyacinth and Moorlake, moved away.

"What are you thinking, Clement?" she asked at last.

"I am thinking that I am glad I did not kill myself fifteen years ago," he said, quietly.

"Take me back, please; I want to dance," she said, rising.

Once in the room she turned a hard face to him.

"Are you going?" she asked.

"Yes," he answered. "Good-night—and good-bye."

He was glad to be alone. Fifteen years had been suddenly sponged off the slate of life. He was free—free to love the woman who loved him—free to tell her so.

Early morning found him at the château.

Before Nellie Vincent had fairly entered the room where he waited he said:

"Althea! where is she?"

"Clement, you have come too late," she replied.

"Too late! What do you mean? She's not dead?"

"Not dead; but yesterday she left us, and we don't know where she has gone."

XVI

It had not been easy for Althea to leave Dinard without the knowledge of the Vincents.

For weeks her longing to go had been growing. Her position began to appear intolerable; with the undue sensibility of overstrained nerves, she felt that she was becoming a burden to Bertie and Nellie, and she determined to be so no longer. She was possessed, moreover, by the haunting fear that Clement would not accept her refusal as final, and the thought of having to undergo a second ordeal spurred on her resolution to disappear.

One day, when the Vincents had gone to Dinan, she induced the gardener at the château to harness a cart and drive her and her boxes over to Dinard. The boat, which left at dusk, was not crowded, and she easily secured a berth.

When Nellie returned she found only these few lines awaiting her:

Forgive me, dear—both of you—my kind, good friends. I am going away for

a time. Do not try to find me. Some day I will write to you, or come. I have worn out your patience, and you must have rest. How I thank you I need not say.

ALTHEA.

Nellie's grief and alarm were little short of frantic; and meanwhile Althea lay in the cabin of the little steamer, on the way to England.

It was a long night; she was stark awake—her eyes would not stay shut. Her mind was almost a blank. She had come to that stage where there seems neither hope nor fear; where thought and reasoning faculty are alike overpowered by a curious lethargy. Without such seasons of mental supineness the nervous and overstrained must perforce become the insane.

In the early part of the night, before the few passengers settled down to rest, two ladies near Althea were talking in low tones. Althea listened mechanically.

"It is a very pretty place," said one, "and quite cheap; four miles from Arundel—a jolly old farmhouse with a thatched roof and ivy; quite a place to lose one's self in."

The last phrase interested Althea acutely.

"I often think," said the other woman, "how easy it would be to hide in such a place. That part of the world is very primitive, though it's only about two hours from town."

Althea listened still more intently.

"What's the address? I might take the children there for Easter."

"Kennerton Farm, Bury, Sussex. You go from Victoria."

Then the conversation languished, and the ladies slept.

To Althea what she had heard seemed providential—if anything could seem providential ever again. It was the voice of fate, perhaps, at last giving her a hint as to what she should do—not leaving her to flounder helplessly in the bog of circumstance. So at least she chose to consider it.

Morning found her in England—dear England, where one wanted to shake hands with the very dockmen

and policemen after a sojourn in France. Even the Hampshire accent of the Southampton natives was not unpleasing after broad, boorish Breton.

At Waterloo Althea breakfasted on the hay tea and sawdust bread made exclusively for the railway station "refreshment" contractors. Then she went to Victoria and took a ticket for Bury—or rather for the nearest town, for she found on inquiry that the railway did not touch Bury itself.

August shed its golden glory over the land. The fields basked in sunlight; the trees had lost their freshness and showed yellow in places. Here and there were cottages covered with deep purple clematis and late Gloire de Dijon roses. Althea dozed uneasily in her third-class carriage and heeded the landscape not at all.

August is the month when, if a man have a spot of earth with a wall around it, he does well to enter in and lock the gate; a month when everyone who is anywhere pants to be somewhere else. Sussex appeared to be full of people engaged in this puss-in-the-corner game. The whole population of England was changing; only, as everyone left his home and went to that of someone else, exchange was no robbery, and each place remained full.

The premier Duke of England, who owns most of the land and houses in and about Arundel, does not encourage newcomers; hence the region thereabouts is not too thickly populated to be charming. It is a noble country of great, rolling downs spattered with beech woods. In the Spring one may walk miles there and never be out of earshot of the skylarks. The blue air is drenched with their melody, and the plaintive cry of newborn lambs—that most pathetic of all sounds—ascends ceaselessly from the sheepfolds.

Bury is a hamlet whose beauty has no jarring note, except the one shop where most of the necessities of life, and a few of its superfluities, are to be bought. The natives have not yet quite discarded the smock frock; there

are farmers who are proud of being farmers, and one or two are lucky enough to have daughters who don't play the piano.

The farmer at Kennerton was one of these happy ones. Althea reached his door on foot, as she could find no trap at the station. She had flagged miserably on the way and looked plaintively at the cyclists who spun past her in the dust, bowed over their wheels as if bent on developing a curvature as soon as possible.

The old house showed a cool, northern face to the road. There, to be sure, were the thatch and the ivy of which the lady on the boat had spoken. The quiet beauty and look of home which it wore brought a gush of tears to the homeless one's eyes. By the time the farmer's daughter came to the door Althea was half-swooning with fatigue and emotion.

Miss Burt gave her one look, and liked her.

"Come in, ma'am, and rest. You had to walk, and in this heat! What a shame! Give me your bag," and she opened the door hospitably wide.

"I am very tired," said Althea, keeping back the tears.

"Hungry, too, no doubt," said Miss Burt. "Perhaps you'd like something to eat before you try to talk. This room is empty. Sit down."

They were in a low-ceiled room with a great whitewashed oak beam across it. The window was long and low, and lattice-paned. On the deep sill were jars of red roses.

"I've come from France—last night. I am very tired, and hungry, too, I think. I want to take rooms here if you have any vacant," Althea explained.

"We've just lost a lodger this morning. But I'll speak to mother, and meanwhile I'll bring you something. Perhaps you'd like to wash, ma'am?"

After ablutions in a quaint, uneven-floored room up stairs, hung with pure white dimity, Althea descended to find cold beef, salad, a fruit tart and a jug of cream set out on the table in the sitting-room.

While she ate, the kind young woman talked things over with her mother, and the bargain was soon made.

Althea became a lodger at Kenner-ton Farm.

XVII

BENEATH the shelter of the old box trees, with the humming of the bees about her and the scents and sounds of late Summer stealing in on her senses, Althea sat for many mornings. Her life passed before her like a dream—as, at the last, it will do for all of us, we may be sure—"a tale that is told." The vision brought a sense of finality to her. How easy, leaning back in her low, lounging chair, her head softly pillowed, her tired eyes closed, to slip out of life; to give up forever the ferment, the striving, the bitterness—"the fever called living!"

Owing to her defective early training she had never had a grip on life in its broadest sense—the life of strenuous endeavor, of altruistic impulse that prompts unselfish deeds. She had grown one-sided—running to emotion and not to action. Such a woman is born to suffer. Life is not loving and dreaming.

The light of the whole world dies
When love is done . . .

was true in the case of Althea. She had moral stamina enough to hate the wrong and love the right; enough even to refuse a half-love; but she was too weak to resist what seemed to be the current of fate.

She wondered ceaselessly what she was to do next, not realizing that our destiny stalks to meet us, and that there is no hole or corner of the earth which can hide us from its dread eye. And so it came to Althea in the old garden under the box trees, amid the booming of the bees.

One morning as she sat there a step on the path made her raise her eyes, and she saw before her Clarice Hil-
yer.

There was a moment of mutual astonished silence.

"What are you doing here?" exclaimed Althea.

Clarice's answer was ready. "I came in for a drink of water. I am stopping in the neighborhood."

Her voice was cool and steady, but her color ranged from red to pale.

Althea got up slowly. She was trembling. The two faced each other. It was no moment for convention—both felt that their naked souls were confronting each other. Althea burst out:

"Why did you ruin me? I never hurt you!"

Clarice stretched out her hand. "Sit down," she said, "you are very pale."

"How can I sit with you standing there?" answered Althea. She was ghastly, and Mrs. Hilyer half-expected to see her fall.

"Let us both sit," she said; "I must talk to you."

She led the way down the box walk to an arbor at the end, cut out of the living shrubs. Mechanically Althea followed—she was good at following—and they sat down. They were so near that their gowns touched. Clarice was lovely, blooming with health, irradiating charm; Althea pale, broken, disordered, and breathing painfully. What man would not have preferred Clarice?—yet she looked at the other woman and knew the one man in the world who meant anything to her despised her as much as he honored Althea.

"Listen!" she said. "You hate me, of course; you say I ruined you, but I swear I didn't mean to. I yielded to an impulse—an unworthy one—and then the trouble was done. I did not want to hurt you."

"Since you did hurt me it is all the same," said Althea. "I would not harm a woman—a poor, wretched creature who is born to suffer because she is a woman—no, not for all the world could give me—not to obtain my heart's desire."

"Your heart's desire!" said the

other. "Who ever gets that? I wonder what yours is?"

"I don't mind telling you," said Althea. "My heart's desire is to die here, quietly, as I sit, and be done with it all."

Clarice looked at her curiously.

"If I felt like that I should kill myself," she said.

"Ah, I have not your courage. You who could stab another woman in the dark could no doubt be brave enough to put yourself out of the world!"

Clarice was perfectly controlled.

"No wonder you are bitter!" she said. "You have a right to be, but I assure you again that I acted without thought. One thing I have done—I have not mentioned your name since then except with respect. I have killed any scandal I have heard. That much I've done for you."

"You are very kind," said Althea. "I wonder why you have done it."

A sudden rage for frankness took possession of Clarice—such a gust of impulse as shakes the most secretive of women at least once in a lifetime. She turned full on Althea.

"Because Moorlake asked me to protect you!" she said, deliberately.

Althea winced. "Moorlake!" she said.

"Yes; he came to me and—and—" Clarice colored and her eyes hardened at the recollection—"asked me—commanded me in his masterful way to stamp out the scandal."

"It was like him," said Althea, and her face became like that of the devotee before the shrine of his patron saint.

Clarice saw the look and bit her lip.

"He loves you!" she exclaimed.

Althea kept silence.

"He is coming here to-night—at least to Lord Parham's, where I'm stopping," Clarice said.

Then indeed Althea's calm broke.

She half-rose, then sank back on the bench.

"Here!" she cried; "so near!"

"I shall see him to-night," said the other.

"Will you do me one favor—the

first—the last—I shall ever ask of you?" panted Althea. "Do *not* tell him that I am here!"

After all, Clarice was not a devil, though a jealous woman is first cousin to one. The utter prostration, physical and mental, pictured on her rival's face struck at her remnant of a heart.

"Is it possible," she said, "that you *wish* not to see him? to remain in hiding?"

"Oh, yes; I must not, *will* not see him!" cried Althea. "I have left the Vincents and tried to lose myself here. Do, for God's sake, help me! You have no reason to hate me; we are not rivals at all; Moorlake is above and beyond us both; he is not for either you or me. Only let me be quiet; perhaps I shall not trouble anyone long."

Clarice Hilyer was silent for a moment. Then she turned and laid her hand on Althea's knee.

"I am a wicked woman," she said, "and my cursed selfishness has ruined you; but I want you to believe that I will help you if I can. But I want you to tell me one thing. You are free now; if Clement Moorlake should ask you to marry him, could you say no?"

Enemy as she had been, there was now so much pity and good faith in Clarice's face that Althea could not choose but answer. Her pride in Clement's chivalry would not let her be silent. It was a small triumph, perhaps, but it was the only spot of light in her dark life—the only hour when she might prove herself a woman among a thousand. She fixed her eyes on Clarice's face.

"I have already refused him," she said.

Mrs. Hilyer sank back with a blank look.

"Mad woman!" she cried. "Refused Clement Moorlake! Why? *why?*"

"We are telling each other the truth to-day," said Althea. "I have not much pride left; I refused him because I knew he loved another woman."

"That is his secret! Ah, I thought

so. That explains everything. Yet he would have married you?"

"Yes, he would have married me."

Clarice hid her face in her hands; then she raised it, and her eyes were wet and shining.

"*That*," she said, her voice thrilling, "is love. I have seen it to-day for the first time. All my life I have known things that called themselves love—self-seeking, desire, passion, vanity, coquetry—but never the real thing. I have seen men who, when they had got what they wanted, rode away; women who added one conquest to another, so that they might count them like beads on a devil's rosary! But to-day I have found love. And it is too high for me."

There was a great stillness. A hard woman had been brushed by the shining wing of her guardian angel, and her heart was purified by the touch.

Presently she stretched out her hand to Althea.

"Tell me," she said, "what will you do? Have you money?"

"Enough."

"You are all alone, aren't you? Oh, I wish I could help you."

"You can—by keeping my secret. I demand it. I have the right."

"Yes, you have the right. I will keep it." Clarice stooped and kissed the thin hand. "Mrs. North, will you forgive me?" she asked.

"I would not hurt a hair of your head," said Althea.

Clarice rose. "I honor you, I respect you, and I will serve you whenever and however you choose."

And so they parted.

Althea knew that the time had come when she must again be moving. She must leave this green spot of earth and in the gray wilderness of London streets seek an inviolable hiding place.

XVIII

THE moon—a huge orange-colored August moon—flooded the old Tudor house and its surrounding park.

Lord Parham's guests had strayed out of doors after dinner, wooed by the gorgeous night. Some were walking in the Italian garden among quaint, clipped yews, pergolas and the slim white statues and urns that peeped forth from masses of late climbing roses. Others passed through the little gate that led to the wild part of the park. Among those were Moorlake and Clarice Hilyer.

He had discovered, with a shock of violent distaste, that she was one of the house party, and had resolved to leave next day. He had spent the past week in unavailing search for Althea, and felt unfit enough for visiting; nothing but the strongest necessity would have forced him to fulfil his engagement with the Parhams. He had conscientious scruples against breaking a promise if he could possibly keep it, and so found himself, weary and out of spirits, near the woman whom of all the world he disliked the most.

Her behavior had been perfect; though she sat beside him at dinner she talked for the most part with the man on the other side, who soon came under her charm.

Afterward, on the brow of the hill that overlooked the lower park, covered with gnarled old oaks and tall bracken, the two met again, quite by accident.

Clarice felt an almost uncontrollable impulse to tell him that within an hour's drive he could find the object of his search, for she was sure that he was seeking Althea. She conceived him to be urged only by a consuming desire to right the woman whom she had wronged; but what she did not know was that he was not alone prompted by honor—that something a thousand times warmer, and not less noble, was making every day's delay a year of torment to him.

Should she break her bad promise and betray the hiding place? Should she make Moorlake and Althea a present of each other? The eager questioning within her kept her tensely silent as she stood in the moonshine looking over the enchanted valley.

It was Clement who spoke first; they had not met since the unforgotten interview in Chelsea.

"What a pity no one can paint a moonlight scene," he observed.

"Many people think they can," said Clarice. "Do you know you have one fault?" she added.

"Only one?" said Clement, stiffly. "What has that to do with moonlight?"

"Nothing at all. But I could not help making the observation."

"You are always very frank with me. May I not hear what my fault is?"

"You have heard it before—intense conventionality. Just look at this situation. A wild park, bathed in moonlight. In the background a fine old Tudor mansion. On one side in the distance a herd of deer, two of them white and spectral in the moonlight. An old church on the other side. In the foreground an extremely handsome man with a face like a Lancelot turned Galahad; a not unprepossessing woman with bare shoulders and a pink chiffon gown. The man hates the woman and the woman fears the man. They are at swords' points. And at this supreme moment Sir Lancelot-Galahad makes a remark about moonlight!"

"That is an interesting picture—very," said Moorlake. "There are only one or two flaws in the description; for instance, 'the woman fears the man'—I don't recognize the truth of that."

"Don't you? And yet you have great penetration."

"You have no reason to like me, but I can't imagine how you can fear me. If I had the power to injure you, you know quite well that I would not do it."

"I believe that, but one fears what one admires. You know parsons preach about *fearing* God. I once asked my mother what that meant, and she said, 'fearing to offend Him.' Do you see?"

"I think you have quite atoned for your former strictures by comparing me to the Deity."

He smiled a little.

"It is blasphemous, isn't it?—but I don't mean badly. You have for me the aloofness and indifference of a god."

His smile grew more indulgent.

"Don't be foolish!" he said. "A god!—a poor, perplexed, faulty fool of a man, who doesn't know what to do next!"

He took a turn up and down the brow of the slope. She followed him with a sudden impulse.

"I think I can help you," she said.

He stood and looked down at her, paying an unwilling tribute to her prettiness and charm.

"I'm almost sure you can't," he said.

"Are you trying to find somebody?"

"Why do you ask that?"

"Only because I want to know."

"I *am* trying to find someone. I wish it more than anything else on earth." He was very serious now.

"Have you searched all through the neighborhood?—at Bury, for instance?"

"Why do you ask that? What do you mean?" There was no disguising his eagerness. His eyes were shining.

Clarice smiled provokingly.

"I don't mean much! I'm cold. Shall we go back?"

"Listen!" he said. "You owe me something; you must tell me! Do you know? Have you seen—the person?"

"I went to Kennerton Farm this morning and drank a glass of water," she said.

She turned and walked slowly before him toward the house. He followed in a fever of impatience.

"Mrs. Hilyer! I ask you—I beg you—to tell me what you mean. Do I humble myself enough? Won't you tell me?"

She turned on him suddenly.

"No," she said, "not enough. You shall first tell me one thing: Do you love Mrs. North?"

He flushed deeply.

"You have no right to ask me

that. It is an intrusion," he exclaimed, his nostrils quivering and the old haughty look on his face.

"Perhaps you are right," said Clarice. "Forgive me—" and she walked on. She had never seen him so eager. It stabbed her to think that another woman was the cause of his unusual emotion. He still followed her, stifling his pride.

"Mrs. Hilyer," he said, as they paused at the gate, "there is, after all, no reason why I should not tell you. I love Althea North with all my heart and soul, and if I do not find her it will be the greatest sorrow of my life."

Clarice's face paled and contracted.

"Is it so serious?" she asked, in a low voice. "You really mean it? She is the happy woman?"

"It is very serious," he answered, "and she is the woman whom I shall try to make happy, if she will let me."

With a perceptible effort Clarice threw off her emotion.

"I can only tell you," she said, half-mockingly, "that the water at Kennerton Farm is very good. It will quench your thirst!" and she left him standing by the gate.

In the early morning he hurried away once more to seek Althea; and once more he was too late. She had left the farm.

XIX

A SMALL room over a baker's shop in Highbury was the next refuge.

Again mere chance had dictated choice. When Althea arrived in London she yielded to an impulse to drive through Chelsea, while she tried to decide on her next move. As the luggage-laden four-wheeler jogged along the King's Road, she prayed for a sign. Just before she came to the Vestry Hall, a blue Highbury 'bus clattered by. It brought a sudden inspiration. Why not Highbury! It was remote, unfashionable—a perfect hiding place. What she should do when settled in this deadly suburb she did not ask herself;

she had become superstitious enough to take anything for a sign, and she at once bargained with her cabman to drive her to Highbury. It was an almost unwarrantable extravagance, for her stock of money was alarmingly low; but she dared not have her boxes sent after her, as they would afford a clue to her seeking friends.

It was not easy to find a lodging, but after a weary search Althea was at last able to install herself in the room over the bakery. The landlady regarded her with suspicion; nobody like that had ever before applied for a lodging. The amount of luggage, however, combined with a fortnight's rent in advance, overcame Mrs. Rose's scruples, and Althea took possession.

She could not improve the appearance of the room much, for with characteristic meanness Oliver North had ordered all her ornaments to be packed away where she could not gain access to them. She had only two treasures, and these she kept under lock and key. One was Violet's first shoe, the other a portrait of Clement which she had cut out of an illustrated weekly the year before, after her first meeting with him. It was so like that she dared not look at it now; but the little shoe she sometimes put under her pillow when she could not sleep. It seemed a talisman with power to calm and soothe. It is a characteristic of mother-love that it survives everything else. The child whom we have brought forth with unspeakable agony and inexpressible joy is inalienably ours. Man's love is selfish and transient; it may pass—nay, it surely will, for love between man and woman does not appear to have been created to stand the test of time; but nothing can take from a woman the unmixed rapture of her child's early years. No matter what the future may have in store—and life's one great certainty is suffering—there must always remain the memory of the little head that nestled in the mother's bosom, the little face that found for a time its God and its heaven in the mother's eyes.

August in London has none of the charm of August in Sussex. The heat, the dust, the dull roll of the 'buses, the sharp clatter of the carts, the poor food, the dingy surroundings, the absence of occupation and diversion—all these made up a daily life that sapped such strength and hope as remained to Althea.

She failed to realize how unhappy she had made Nellie and Bertie, and even Moorlake. Every day in the "agony column" of the *Times* appeared a poignant appeal to her to return. It was so worded that she alone would have recognized it—but she never saw the *Times*.

She forced herself to walk a little each day, resting sometimes on a bench in the little park near her lodging. For hours she would sit at the open windows of her room watching the 'buses go by. Their clatter seemed to say: "We can take you to Clement! We can take you to Clement!" For a few pence she could have gone to Chelsea. One day the desire became too strong; she hailed a blue 'bus—had her foot on the step, and then, as the horses started, withdrew it, almost falling to the gutter. The conductor exclaimed angrily, but she did not heed—once more she had conquered.

In September she went to the city and saw her solicitor. He gave her the money she needed—more than usual, for he had contrived to squeeze something out of North—and told her that Moorlake and the Vincents had come to him more than once to inquire if he had seen her.

"You must at least let me assure them that you are safe and well," he said, thinking, as he looked at her, that her days were numbered.

"You may do that, if you like," she said, listlessly. "But you must keep my secret. I will never go back while there is a chance of meeting Mr. Moorlake."

Then she spoke of Violet and asked what prospect there was of her ever seeing the child again, but he could give her little comfort.

When they parted he said: "For-

give me for saying it, but you are in the wrong."

"Perhaps I am," she assented, dully, "but I can't do otherwise."

"You should see Mr. Moorlake once more, at least," he urged.

She shook her head sadly.

"I prefer the guillotine to Chinese torture," she said, and so left him.

Physically she was near the end of her tether. One day in October it did not seem worth while to get up. It was a dull, lowering day with a foretaste of Winter fog in the air. The reek of chimneys mingled with the pleasant smell of fresh bread coming from the bakery below. Althea lay in the narrow iron bed with its coarse sheets, gray with the London blight, and stared at the little room. In the window was a rickety dressing-table, the mirror of which had to be coaxed with a wad of paper to remain at a useful angle. There was a band of brassy metal across the top of the lower window sash, holding a short Nottingham lace curtain that had also the dim bloom of soot upon it. There were a chest of drawers, two chairs, a washstand furnished with odd pieces of china and with two flabby gray towels on the rail; the paper was a washable "sanitary" one with a maddening pattern in dull brown; the carpet was worn, faded and grimed to an even, despondent tone.

"What a room to die in!" thought Althea, for she hoped that her intense lassitude might foretell dissolution. She remembered the white enameled wood and pale blue chintz of her bedroom in Pont street, and the irony of life in general and hers in particular made her smile bitterly.

Mrs. Rose bustled in with the breakfast. Several weeks of prompt payment and unimpeachable respectability of conduct had softened her commercial heart.

"Well, I'm sure," she exclaimed, setting down the tray on a chair, "you don't look up to much this morning!"

"No, I'm not," said Althea. "I

think I shall stay in bed a little while."

"Why should you get up? Your life isn't so busy, is it? Not much to stir you up like, is there?" responded Mrs. Rose. "I always wonder how you do get through the days."

Althea began pouring out the tea, which was always fresh and good. As she turned, a little shoe fell out from under the pillow.

Mrs. Rose's face kindled with interest.

"Oh, the dear little shoe!" she exclaimed, picking it up. "Did that belong to a child of yours, ma'am?"

A sudden flush surged over Althea's face and weak tears trickled from her lashes.

"There, there!" said the landlady, "I didn't ought to 'a' been so sudden! Perhaps the poor little darling's in heaven."

Althea lost all her self-control; all the silence, privation, repression of the past two months rolled up and crushed her. A tidal wave of emotion seemed rearing its crest and tumbling nearer and nearer till it broke over her and, breaking, blotted out the world. By night she was delirious.

Such a thing had never before occurred in Mrs. Rose's household since she had let lodgings. She was extremely embarrassed, and no less sympathetic. She turned for advice to Mr. Rose, whom she was not apt to honor in that way. He was a slow man, and took time to consider. Next morning, after his wife had had a sleepless night, watching in Althea's room, he mildly suggested a doctor.

The medical man, when he came, pronounced the patient very ill, and asked if she had any friends or relatives. Then again the Roses were nonplussed. What clue was there for them to go by? A baby's shoe afforded no useful evidence. But as Althea grew worse the doctor became more urgent. He pressed Mrs. Rose to examine all Mrs. North's belongings in search of information.

"Which I feels like a thief," observed the landlady, as, within sound

of the patient's ravings, she turned over the contents of the boxes.

There was nothing to assist her. Only one small box, which was locked, looked hopeful.

"But I can't hardly break it open," said the reluctant Mrs. Rose.

"I can—and will," said the doctor, who had the worst possible opinion of Althea's condition.

When the lid of the box flew open it disclosed only the newspaper portrait of Clement Moorlake, with the name beneath.

"Well, I never!" said Mrs. Rose. "The poor thing's husband, I suppose."

But the doctor was a man who knew a thing or two, though he did live in Highbury. He had heard of Moorlake. He went and consulted the Red Book, discovered where the sculptor lived, and then wrote him a note.

Next day Althea's fever abated, but her weakness was pitiable. Pulse there was next to none; the overtaxed nerves, the impoverished blood, were taking their revenge. She was conscious, but was too far gone to show that she was. Toward afternoon she felt a soft hand on her forehead and smelt a delicate fragrance like that of fresh violets—an odor that contended triumphantly with the bread and the soot. She did not want to know who it was—it might be her long-dead mother come to welcome her into the other world.

The hand came and went, but the violets stayed. Once or twice she heard a voice—very far off, but very familiar. She could not connect it with any person she had known, yet its tones brought a curious, vague comfort that curled round her scarce beating heart and warmed it. Then she began to understand—she was dead, and the kind spirits who had carried her away were letting her rest and gain strength before entering on the new life. She liked being dead. She felt warm and clean and comfortable; only, of course, being dead, she could not move at all, just at first. One of the spirits fed her very often,

and if she had been alive, she would have said that she swallowed beef tea sometimes and sometimes brandy, but she supposed that must be a delusion, because the dead do not eat.

Then there came a day when somebody kindly took the weights off her eyes. The lids quivered and opened a little. It was morning, and a little light struggled in. A form wonderfully like an earthly woman, in a white cap and apron, stood by the bed.

"She is sensible," murmured the woman.

A deep breath was drawn by someone else near by. Althea searched for her voice, so long unused that she seemed to have mislaid it.

"Not dead?" she said, so softly it was a wonder anybody heard it.

But the white-capped person bent over her and the voice of someone else said, very low: "Thank God!"

Then Althea's eyes opened wider, and she saw Nellie.

XX

CAMPDEN HILL once more—love, friendship, security, home! Slowly Althea struggled back to life; slowly, yet with a sweetness, a serenity that she had not known before.

For she had looked life and death in the face and had learned her lesson, the truth the world holds for every one of us, that we can none of us be perfectly happy, but that we can all be brave and patient.

No hint of Clement's new-born love had come to her. Nellie was pledged to silence—indeed, absolute reticence was enforced by Althea, who would not hear Clement's name.

But the time came at last when the secret was to be made manifest.

One afternoon in December Althea sat in the morning-room, which seemed inexpressibly restful and beautiful after the Highbury lodging. She was still pale and thin, but not white and wasted as she had been two months before. It was pleasant to sit looking into the fire, thinking about nothing. She had learned how

to do that, and found it a wholesome accomplishment. When ugly, wearing thoughts put up their heads she promptly extinguished them. To-day she was all peace. Nellie had left her for half an hour, but presently she returned and began to make tea. She was far from calm, and clattered about among the tea things in an unusual manner.

"Where have you been, Nellie?" asked her friend. "I'm like a baby without its nurse when you leave the room."

"I had a caller," answered Nellie.

"A woman or a man?"

"A man."

"Someone you like?"

"Yes; and it's lucky I do like him, as he has been here in the last two months just fifty times."

"Good gracious! He must be in love with you."

"Not with *me*."

Something in the tone made Althea turn in her deep chair and look at Mrs. Vincent.

"Nellie . . ." she began.

"It's no use," broke out Nellie; "you've got to see him!"

Althea half-rose. "If you begin that . . ." she said.

Nellie was almost stern. She left the tea table, came over to Althea, and stood with her hand gently pressing her back into her chair.

"Althea," she said, gravely, "you are strong enough now to hear what Clement has to say. It is unfair to him to refuse. He is the loyalest, finest creature I've ever known. Any woman would die for him gladly if she loved him, and even if you don't you have no right to deny him a hearing."

"If I don't!" said Althea, slowly. She was looking up into Nellie's eyes, but she covered her face after a moment with her thin hand. "I thought you understood," she said, with something of the old weakness.

"I thought so, too, dear," said Nellie. "But everything is changed. He has come here nearly every day, hoping and praying to see you—to tell you . . . He is here now."

Althea made a movement as if to escape, but all at once Moorlake was in the room—was beside her—near, near, with both her hands in his, and Nellie was gone.

"Forgive me," he said, softly; "I could not wait another minute."

He was half-kneeling beside her, still holding her hands. Of all she had had to bear this was the strangest, the sweetest, the bitterest, for it was like life and death together. All the sorrow, the joy, the mystery and the fulness of a whole existence were in that moment, in that touch. In an instant her blood leaped and her heart bounded. For something in Clement was changed—something had gone, and something was come in its place. His old look she knew, but not this. On that face which she had loved better than happiness she had seen pity, kindness, affection; but now, unless her senses were fatally mistaken, here was love—a love such as few women ever win and fewer still contrive to keep. His clasp sent fresh, full life through her veins. She did not know the meaning of it all, and so she only sat still, finding it joy enough to feel, without knowing.

"My dear, my dear," he said, "may

I tell you now? Are you strong? Can you listen?"

She only smiled assent—such a strange smile, like that of one who sees the heavens open, but knows not if the revelation be for him or another.

"Oh, Althea! how I have searched for you! and how I have loved you!"

"Loved me?" she said, softly.

"Yes; loved," he answered, vehemently, "as I never knew I could love."

"I can't believe—I dare not." She gently drew her hand away.

"You send me away?" he cried.

"No—no! Stay—but tell me—make me understand."

And then he told her everything—of his love, his long misplaced loyalty, his sudden disillusion. In that ardent, hurried story lay the recompense for all she had suffered. When it was over, he knelt once more beside her and asked her for an answer.

"Do you love me?" he said; "did you ever love me?"

But there are truths that need no telling. Here at last she was in his arms, not pitied, but loved. It was more than she could bear. Her head drooped—her eyes closed—closed, as he feared, forever. But the weakness passed.



EQUIVOCAL ENTHUSIASM

HUSBAND—To-day I met a gentleman who told me he was engaged to you at one time.

WIFE—What did you say?

"I congratulated him, of course."



JUST HIS LUCK

WILLIS—A funny thing happened when Hawkins swore off swearing.

WALLACE—What was that?

WILLIS—He had an attack of golf fever.

THE PANSY PRINCESS

PURPLE and gold as sunset of the North,
 Thou Pansy, tell what thought lies hid in thee;
 Dost dream upon a time when knights went forth
 The pomp and splendor of thy court to see?

In trailing robes of satin and brocade,
 Didst reign a queen o'er nations wild and vast,
 Till ruthless Time decreed their suns should fade,
 Their glories be but ashes of the past?

Close to thy side, all fierce in black and gold,
 A pansy warrior guards thee still with care;
 Dost thou recall a day when, over-bold,
 He wooed thee with the sunlight on his hair?

And near in shadow, pale as some sweet saint,
 A snow-white pansy opens to the day—
 A pious nun with pallid lips and faint,
 Who bows her head the while she seems to pray.

For thee, O pagan princess of the dawn,
 For thee, O warrior knight of valorous deeds,
 The pale nun prays, with downcast face and wan,
 While through her fingers slip the silent beads.

And is it true that all the prayer and love,
 And all the wealth and worldliness of powers,
 When centuries have come and gone, will prove
 Mere memories in thoughtful pansy flowers?

GERTRUDE NERES.



WASTING WORDS

BISHOP—Why didn't you tell Robinson he was a liar?
 BROOKS—It wouldn't have done any good. He has told me I am one
 many a time.



BUT ONE INFERENCE

FLORA (*who is engaged to Arthur*)—Has Arthur ever proposed to you?
 CARRIE—Well, it amounted to a proposal. He asked me if I thought he
 could do better than marry you.

THE MADNESS OF ISHTAR

By Bliss Carman

VERMILION and ashen and azure,
Pigment of leaf and wing,
What will the sorceress Ishtar
Make out of color and Spring?

Of old was she not Aphrodite,
She who is April still,
Mistress of longing and beauty,
The sea and the Hollow Hill?

Ashtoreth, Tanis, Astarte—
A thousand names she has borne
Since the first new moon's white magic
Was laid on a world forlorn.

Odor of tulip and cherry,
Scent of the apple blow,
Tang of the wild arbutus—
These to her crucible go.

Honey of lilac and willow,
The spoil of the plundering bees,
Savor of sap from the maples—
What will she do with these?

Oboe and flute in the forest,
And pipe in the marshy ground,
And the upland call of the flicker—
What will she make of sound?

Start of the green in the meadow,
Push of the seed in the mould,
Burst of the bud into blossom—
What will her cunning unfold?

The waning belt of Orion,
The crescent zone of the moon—
What is the mystic transport
We shall see accomplished soon?

THE SMART SET

The sun and the rain and the south wind,
With all the treasure they bring—
What will the sorceress Ishtar
Make from the substance of Spring?

She will gather the blue and the scarlet,
The yellow and crimson dye,
And weave them into a garment
Of magical texture and ply.

And whoso shall wear that habit
And favor of the earth,
He shall be lord of his spirit,
The creatures shall know his worth.

She will gather the broken music,
Fitting it chord by chord,
Till the hearer shall learn the meaning,
As a text that has been restored.

She will gather the fragrance of lilacs,
The scent of the cherry flower,
And he who perceives it shall wonder,
And know, and remember the hour.

She will gather the moonlight and starshine,
And breathe on them with desire,
And they shall be changed on the moment
To the marvel of earth's green fire.

The ardor that kindles and blights not,
Consumes and does not destroy,
Renewing the world with wonder,
And the hearts of men with joy.

For this is the purpose of Ishtar,
In her great lone house of the sky,
Beholding the work of her hands
As it shall be by-and-bye:

Out of the passion and splendor,
Faith, failure and daring, to bring
The illumined dream of the spirit
To perfection in some far Spring.

Therefore, shall we not obey her—
Awake and be glad and aspire—
Wise with the ancient knowledge,
Touched with the earthly fire?

In the spell of the wild enchantment
The shy wood creatures know,
Must we not also with Ishtar
Unhindered arise and go?

Hearing the call and the summons,
 Heeding the hint and the sign,
 Rapt in the flush and the vision,
 Shall we demur or repine?

Dare you deny one impulse,
 Dare I one joy suppress—
 Knowing the might and dominion,
 The lure and the loveliness?

Delirium, glamour, bewitchment,
 Bidding earth blossom and sing,
 Shall we falter or fail to follow
 The voice of our mother in Spring?

For Love shall be clothed with beauty,
 And walk through the world again,
 Hearing the haunted cadence
 Of an immortal strain;

Caring not whence he wandered,
 Fearing not whither he goes,
 Great with the fair new freedom
 That every earth child knows;

Impetuous as the wood wind,
 Ingenuous as a flower,
 Glad with the fulness of being,
 Born of the perfect hour;

Counting not cost nor issue,
 Weighing not end and aim,
 Sprung from the clay-built cabin
 To powers that have no name.

And with all his soul and body
 He shall only seek one thing.
 For that is the madness of Ishtar,
 Which comes upon earth in Spring.



WISEACREAGE

IT'S a wise child that makes cowards of us all.
 How can we look for change when we're always here and it's always
 now?

This is a world of sin and misery. Sin is man's share, and misery
 woman's.

The modern poet achieves a penciled sonnet to a penciled eyebrow.

Heart hunger is not so bad as heart indigestion.

Our aspirations frequently turn out to be exasperations.

Love is the one window through which the Finite may catch a glimpse
 of the Infinite.

CAROLYN WELLS.

TO YOU

GOD made the rose time of the year, the June
 Of realized bud and blossoming fulfilled;
 O'er all the land His fragrances He spilled,
 And taught each bird a newer, gladder tune.
 He heaped upon the earth the radiant boon
 Of rose on rose, till each sad corner thrilled
 With fragrancing, and all its woes were stilled;
 Then over all He set the jewel moon,
 And flashed the silver stars across the sky.
 So all the gracious glory of the year
 Created He, and knowing it must die
 And earth again must know dark days and drear,
 He fashioned it a symbol, and there grew
 Beneath His fingers the dear form of you!

ETHEL M. KELLEY.



COLD COMFORT

NERVOUS PASSENGER—Captain, what would be the result if this boat
 should strike an iceberg?
 CAPTAIN—It would probably shiver its timbers.



REASON FOR REJOICING

WILLIS—You seem to have a good opinion of the faith cure.
 WALLACE—Well, why shouldn't I? It cured me of the patent medicine
 habit.



MIRACLE

THAT in your absence I can feel this thrill,
 Pulsing my inmost soul; that I can know
 Such wonder and such ecstasy, until
 I marvel at the heights whereto I go,

Deem it not strange, beloved; every hour
 Is white with consecration ever new,
 And in my heart there blooms, like some glad flower,
 The radiant and lovely thought of you!

CHARLES HANSON TOWNE.

VANITY SQUARE

By Edgar Saltus

“WE authors,” Beaconsfield is rumored to have remarked in the course of a conversation with the Queen; and though the plural was singular, it is rumored, too, that with it he flattered her basely. It is rumored also that nothing ever flattered her more except when he made her Empress of India. These rumors are repeated for what they are worth. One of them relates to an incident that occurred a long time ago, and may not have occurred at all. Even so, and even otherwise, a point remains. Titles appeal to women. They are highly decorative, very becoming, serviceable in more ways than one. They may not, perhaps, lessen the length of the ears, but the attendant tiaras conceal that. *C'est déjà beaucoup*. The taste is not limited to women, either. On the other side there are men who would not know how to get along without them. They secure credit from tradesmen and attention from heiresses. What more could the heart desire? In the circumstances a bill recently submitted to the Italian Parliament merits consideration.

The measure provides that in exchange for coin titles may be transmuted. After all, why not? The difference between mister and monseigneur is not of a nature to weigh with a sturdy American, but in the smart set it tickles the girls. Every one of them loves a lord, though it is not every one of them who has a lord to love.

The bill, then, is sufficiently praiseworthy. What it lacks is utility. Since the beginning of years and the beginning of things titles have been pur-

chasable in Italy. They could be had in the Rome of the Cæsars as well as in the Rome of the Saints. There are at this minute a hundred princes who for a hundred dollars are not only able but anxious to supply them. The process, legally catalogued as adoption, has been performed again and again. For that matter, a New York woman who shall be nameless secured here, for causes that shall be nameless also, a divorce and journeyed abroad. Whether or not she collaborated in a theory we have long entertained, to the effect that a woman who marries a second time does not deserve to have lost her first husband, is immaterial. The point is that, discovering the name she bore—at arm's length—had its disadvantages, she purchased the right to be known and addressed as Princess. Principessa della Luna Bianca, let us say. A year passed. Two, perhaps. Ultimately it fell about that at some function or other a man who had been introduced gazed musingly at her and asked if he had not had the pleasure of meeting her somewhere before. The Princess smiled and tapped him with her fan. “Why, yes, indeed; don't you remember? You used to be my husband.”

The story has a moral, as all proper stories should have. Titles ought to be purchasable here. Such an arrangement would enable women to dispense with husbands. That in itself is enough to commend it. Society would be delightful were women all married and all men single. But the idea has another charm. It would check the export of heiresses. The latter are at a premium. Commercially speaking, the demand

exceeds the supply. There are not enough to go around. As a consequence, in the absence of a measure such as we have suggested, we see no good and valid reason why another should not be passed inhibiting their abduction. A bill of this kind would not interfere with the tariff, and might increase the revenue. It would be a protective measure of the proper sort. The open door is all very well, but not where our girls are concerned.

Girls, though, are so constituted that there is no arguing with them. They believe in free trade. From certain statistics and studies we are enabled to infer that they believe in titles also. And very logically. A title can be divided. A duke makes a duchess, whereas a man of brains cannot share his intellect with a fool. Were it otherwise strawberry leaves might cease to appeal.

Yet were things otherwise than as they are life might be fair as a dream. Obviously, it is just the reverse. A woman's heart, for instance—or, more exactly, the heart of a pretty woman—is a bonbon wrapped in riddles. A fool may stop to solve, but a wise man nibbles away. And very good it tastes, too, until indigestion ensues, and he turns to other fare. For the devil of it is that no man can subsist on one dish. However delicious the dish may be, the hour comes when it palls. Muhammad probably understood the fact when he promised to the faithful throughout all eternity a fresh houri every day. Every day is perhaps excessive. Moreover, an eternal feast might prove as distressing as an eternal fast. Yet we assume there was to be nothing compulsory in the matter and that the faithful could diet if they chose. "Not too much of anything," said a profound epicure; and whether served with riddles or without, a variety of bonbons, even in courses, even in Paradise, must become as indigestible as the repetition of one particular sweet.

This is not right. It is not right that man should be so constituted

that he needs must weary, not merely of one dish but of all. *Mais que veux-tu que voilà!* Against this sorry scheme of things novelists without number and poets without publishers have spawned copy by the ton. Quite unavailingly, too. Nobody by taking pen and paper can add a charm to a statue. Life is just about as hard. And yet were it not for its pleasures it might be endurable. Were it not that the things we like are either iniquitous or injurious we might pull through. Even otherwise we are bound to lose our illusions, and what is worse, our umbrellas and our hair. The scheme is, indeed, sorry, particularly when you consider that the world is filled with charming people whom we never meet—except in a few memoirs that are out of print and a few operas that are out of date. Ballets, indeed, occasionally present them, especially the variety known to foreigners as *féeries*, that are delightful comminglings of fair faces, lips of silk, incandescent eyes, skirts of tulle, shuttled with clinging measures, sudden caresses, startling flowers, auroras and apotheoses. Representations of this order are really consolatory. They fascinate the eye, release the imagination and send it vagabonding afar through the marvels of lands where dreams come true.

"*O Paradis*," the tenor sings in the last act of "*L'Africaine*," "*O Paradis, sorti de l'onde*." There it is, and without the nuisance, too, of assisting at the soprano's demise under an upas tree. In these lands there is nothing of that kind—at most the spectacle of a faithless favorite sewn in a sack and tossed by your hurrying eunuchs into the deep and indifferent sea. That, though, is a sight very dreamlike and agreeable to contemplate. So, too, are the caravans of Circassians, the swaying palanquins, the sombre and splendid bazaars. The turbans of the merchants that pass are heavy with sequins and secrets. The pale mouths of the blue-bellied fish that rise from the sleeping waters are aglow with gems. In courtyards

tapestried with cashmeres, chimeras and hippogriffs await your approach. In the air is the odor of spices, the scent of the wines of Schiraz. The silence is threaded with the hum of harps, with the murmur of kisses and flutes. The days are grooved with alternating delights; they detain, indeed, but the nights enthrall. There are a thousand and one of them, and they are the preludes to the *Pays des Songes*.

Before entering a mosque the Moslem leaves his slippers at the door. Before entering Fairyland leave stocks in the Street, perplexities behind, and with them the usual collection of unhallowed ruminations. These things are as sacrilegious as automobiles would be. They are out of place in a land where the palace of the White Cat rears its enchanted turrets to the sky, where at any moment you may stumble over the *Belle au Bois Dormant*, find Cinderella's little foot in your hand, encounter the seduction of sylphs, the witchery of the willis, feel the April of their lips on yours, taste the rapture of life as it ought to be, the savor of immaculate joy.

Before Tahiti was vulgarized by Loti, and Bora Bora took to moral corsets, it is possible that the savor was apprehensible there. It is possible that in some of the untrotted islands of the South Seas an illusion of it still subsists. But elsewhere it has gone. Even the ballet does not produce it any more. It has vacated the earth as beauty will do. Progress is too utilitarian for either. What progress does not need it lops. It has made it easy to travel and nowhere to travel to. Enchantments have evaporated, hippogriffs are no more. The sky has changed colors with it. There are scenes as there are sorceries that have gone from us forever. There are advertisements where there were witcheries, commerce where there were caprices, patent medicines in lieu of enthrallments, the shriek of steam where sylphs have strayed. The one place in which the past and the poetry of it persevere is the neigh-

borhood of thrones. There is the ideal's last refuge. There, too, is the Mecca of Vanity Square.

Those who want to get there and can't, catalogue as snobbish those who can and do. Everything being possible, the cataloguing may be exact. But snobbishness is not appreciated at its worth. It is something very commendable. Snobbish people are always trying to appear other than what they are, and the effort is certainly virtuous. Contentment is a very degraded condition. It is bovine. Discontent is a most reassuring sign. People are always discontented when they are trying to improve. The desire for improvement is an aspiration, and what aspiration more praiseworthy can there be than the ambition to look down on your neighbor? Call it snobbish if you will, but recognize that snobbishness has its merits.

Courts, too, have theirs. Yet if we may believe what we hear, and that is always such a pleasure, they are not what they were. Those who frequent them take a succulent satisfaction in relating the disillusionments they have met. Even so, apart from the ballet, they are the sole resorts capable of suggesting Fairyland now. It is unfortunate that Mr. Cook is not in a position to supply round-trip tickets to them, but progress aiding, no doubt that enterprise will come. Meanwhile, one of the easiest passports being a title, it is only natural that the latter should appeal.

There are, though, titles and titles. A year or two ago the *Revue des Revues* demonstrated that those promanaded by members of the Jockey, the Pommes de Terre and the Cercle de la Rue Royale were not worth the cards on which they were printed; that there was not an authentic noble in the lot. The demonstration was denounced as unpatriotic. We saw it alleged that it was calculated to throw a scare into the hearts of American girls, who, being heavy consumers, had largely increased the national wealth. At the time this argument did not seem to appeal to our friend

and brother-in-letters, M. Henri Rochefort. "Should it occur," he declared, "should the hour come when our sprigs of nobility are no longer purchased by exotic quails, I, for one, would not weep for grief." And M. Rochefort added: "The idle descendant of a Crusader is a sucking pig. The female Yankee is a peacock. What good can such a couple work? There may have been unions between them which have not turned out badly, yet in that case the parties have been more lucky than wise."

M. Rochefort was quite right. It was, of course, very rude of him to call our heiresses names. Besides, admitting them to be quails, they can't be peacocks also. That is impossible. Ornithology is unacquainted with any such fowl. But he scored a point. To us as to him the heiress is a *rara avis*. Hence the beauty of the measures which we have suggested. Hence the *pro bono publicum* of them, too. Though we have lost our bisons let us preserve our birds—from Frenchmen, at least, and while we are at it, from all other foreigners as well.

A good motto for those birds might be: *Évitez les étrangers en général et les Français en cabinet particulier*. Russians especially, though very taking, should be admired with circumspection and avoided with care. They are all princes, and we know what the Bible says about them. If we have our facts correctly—and if not it would not surprise us—their prevalence is due to some old ruffian of a Tsar who in a drunken fit ordered every hereditary title, save those appertaining to his own family, abolished and the documents relating to them destroyed. These titles some successor or other restored, but as the original grants were no longer in existence, everybody who possessed the energy was free to put in a claim. From the results we should judge that the number of persons possessing that energy must have been inordinate.

German titles are not advantageous, either. When authentic they are awkward, and local purchasers are not in

favor in Berlin. The Kaiser calls them *gemeine Amerikanerinnen*. English titles, though they come higher, provide more for the money. They are, perhaps, the best. But though the best, we cannot regard them as desirable for our girls. When obtained, certain results have occasionally ensued. In these instances the party of the second part is usually a duke who in other circumstances would prefer to follow a fashion set by his ancestors and get a bride from among the nobility of his land. But the nobility is poor, the castle is crumbling, the moat is choked, sheriffs are passing over the drawbridge, there are no warders to guard it any more. In short, there are ways and means to be considered, and who can supply them so well as a nice little American girl!

That little girl is not merely nice; she is charming. She never omits to have in her that which will make a duchess worthy of the strawberry leaves. And so quickly does she assimilate the conditions of her new existence that no one suspects her origin, no one dreams that she once had a twang, that she lived in a land of savages and dressed in feathers and bead. No; no one knows it except the duke, and he is too ducal to tell, too considerate to let anyone suppose that, among the redskins where he found her, had she not had bag upon bag of wampum he would have rubbed noses and passed on his way. And he is very sweet to that little girl, very loving, very thoughtful, very courteous, until it occurs to him that there are other women in the land, that a duke acknowledges to himself but one law—his pleasure, and to his duchess but one duty—neglect. And presently in the castle, rebuilt now and rewardered, yet so far from the long grass and palm trees of home, that little girl will sit and weep, and if she is a good little girl, as all nice little American girls are supposed to be, she will sit and weep alone.

The tableau is affecting, yet hardly emulative. But then, arrangements

of this kind do not always turn out so badly. On the contrary, they turn out worse. The parties to them yawn in each other's face.

Such are the conditions in Vanity Square. When those who dwell there are not up to some devilishness they are bound to be alarmingly dull.



SHE IS NOT FAIR

SHE is not fair to other eyes,
 No poet's dream is she,
 Nor artist's inspiration, yet
 I would not have her be.
 She wanders not through princely halls,
 A crown upon her hair;
 Her heart awaits a single king
 Because she is not fair.

Dear lips, your half-shy tenderness
 Seems far too much to win;
 Yet has your heart a tiny door
 Where I may peep within?
 That voiceless chamber, dim and sweet,
 I pray may be my own;
 Dear little Love, may I come in
 And make you mine alone?

She is not fair to other eyes,
 I would not have it so;
 She needs no further charm or grace,
 Nor aught wealth may bestow;
 For when the lovelight shines and makes
 Her dear face glorified—
 Ah, sweetheart, queens may come and go
 And all the world beside!

KATHERINE LA FARGE NORTON.



THOUGHTFUL PRECAUTION

SHE—Love is blind, you know.

HE (*rising*)—Yes, but your neighbors are not. May I pull down the blinds?



WILES OF THE TEMPTER

FLORA—Has old Mr. Moneybags given you any encouragement?

BESSIE—I regarded it as such. He told me it made him feel ten years older to be with me.

ERE THE KING WEARIED

I KNOW not fear, regret, nor grief nor tears,
Who sit and broider in my 'customed place;
I grow nor old nor young throughout the years—
They say he hath not yet forgot my face.

I mind me of my fleeting dream of bliss,
Ere, watching close, I saw without surprise,
As tenderly he leaned to take my kiss,
A flicker of the shade across his eyes.

Enough! I turned and held my head above
The courtiers' gibes, before my reign was spent,
Swept past the Queen whose fetters killed his love,
And ere the King was weary—free, I went.

I called my page to bring my palfrey white,
At dusk we turned us on our homeward way;
My father's castle dawned upon our sight
Before the night had yielded to the day.

Then slipped I from the saddle and alone
Walked onward toward the hill where I was born,
And unafrighted spake in calmest tone
To those who barred my way with looks of scorn:

"Kinsmen, ye sent me forth to win
A knight to claim my hand,
Ye sent me forth, and I have won
The highest in the land.

"I know no rival, sirs, not I,
For still his love I hold—
Unheard his messages, I went
Before his heart grew cold.

"I took nor gold nor title vain;
To love him was my will.
Of gifts that he sends after me,
Take, an ye wish, your fill.

"I would there throbbed beneath my heart
(It may not be, alas!)
That which should live to prove his claim—
Stand back, and let me pass!"

FLORENCE SCOLLARD BROWN.

THE VAN KUYPER VERDICT

By Fanny Gregory Sanger

THE Van Kuypers were the patriarchal family of New Haarlem. Not, be it understood, one of the oldest, but the very oldest, dating back not only to the Van Kuyper who was a burgomaster when Petrus Stuyvesant was Governor of New Amsterdam, but to the still more remote ancestor who had been a linen merchant in the old Dutch city of Haarlem.

It was in honor of that Haarlem that his American descendant, when he divided his big New Jersey farm into town lots, named the city that has since become so prosperous and renowned.

It is not strange, therefore, that the Van Kuypers felt a very justifiable pride in themselves.

The present family represented the seventeenth authentic generation, the ninth American one, and the seventh to live in the old homestead, and were naturally conscious of their superiority to the common run of mortals, unfortunate beings who actually boasted if they had a grandfather, and in the majority of cases seemed oblivious to the fact that the human race dated more than two generations back.

The last Van Kuyper, Van Horn of that name, earned the deepest commiseration of all his admiring and respectful neighbors when his wife, who had been a Stuyvesant, presented him with ten daughters and never a son to perpetuate the family name and fame.

Oh, the pity of it! This was the greatest misfortune that had ever befallen this great and famous family, whose immunity from the ill-luck attendant on ordinary people was at-

tributed by them, and no doubt justly, to the reverence—which I would remind you Webster defines as “fear mingled with respect and esteem”—to the great reverence with which even the fickle goddess, Fortune, regarded them.

Of course the inevitable sorrows of death and illness had descended on them, but even nature had been kind, and the Van Kuypers were a notoriously long-lived race. It was a matter of record that there had never been a hunchback, a harelip, a goitre or a squint known among them, only a moderate number of fools, and those only on the distaff side. Could record be cleaner?

The Van Kuypers knew it was entirely to the richness of the purple fluid that coursed in their veins that they owed these uncommon blessings, and now, at this late day, despite the wonderful progress of the nineteenth century, in the great and productive days of invention, science and the arts, at the very time when the most was expected from the head of the family, to have such a calamity befall him as the birth of ten daughters filled all who knew him with consternation and dismay.

That the twentieth century should dawn and no male heir appear to carry the name to future generations! It was a disaster! a catastrophe! a cataclysm!

Six only of the girls had survived infancy, and poor Mrs. Van Kuyper, as she contemplated these six robust maidens, felt herself little short of criminal. She, poor soul, had struggled nobly to do her duty. Year after year she had faithfully brought a

promise to the Van Kuypers; year after year there had been a certain period of joyful expectation, only to eventuate, as in the case of the immortal firm of Dombey & Son, in "a daughter after all."

It was many years now since there had been even a promise, and Mrs. Van Kuyper, saturated with the traditions of seventeen generations, felt she really ought to die and so make room for a younger wife who might redeem those ten awful blunders of hers; but she was a singularly healthy soul, and so lived on, while the girls waxed to womanhood, with the hope remaining to the family that one at least of the girls would marry an accommodating man who would consent to assume the family name and so save it from extinction.

There was Lysbet, the eldest, a typical Van Kuyper, tall, robust and fair, with the high forehead and round, Dutch face of her distinguished ancestors. Lysbet had married a Van Hoesen, a man with a mind and a lineage of his own, and so foolishly proud and stubborn that nothing could induce him to see the advantages of changing his name, so that his five sturdy sons were Van Hoesens, and his pretty daughter, Duvertie, would be also a Van Hoesen until some fortunate man decreed otherwise.

Christina, the second daughter, earned the family displeasure by uniting her fortunes to a plain James Smith, whose redeeming feature was a plethoric bank account that had been accumulated by the offensive Smith's own personal efforts. This very unwelcome member of the family, this intruder into the sacred precincts of ancestry, had all the stiff-necked stubbornness of the parvenu, and flatly declined in very inelegant and forcible terms to change his name; hence it was a source of intense gratification to them all that Christina redeemed herself by having only one child, and that a girl.

Anneke was Mrs. Petrus Duy Kinck, a colorless sort of person, and foolish enough to consider Duy Kinck quite

as good a name for her small boys and girls as Van Hoesen.

Gertruyd was a childless widow again betrothed, so the hopes of the family were centred in Katrinka, the fifth daughter, and Janettie, the sixth, who were as yet unmarried.

Janettie was still in the school-room, but Katrinka, between whom and her younger sister the four little victims of cholera infantum had blossomed and perished, was twenty-nine years of age, and horror of horrors! verging on spinsterhood, and the family felt this almost as they did the fact that there was no male heir.

Katrinka was more typically Dutch than the Zuyder Zee—so short, so rotund, so flaxen that she was the family pride. Whole generations of Dutch burghers were expressed in her blue eyes and wide, knobby forehead. Even her mother felt she had almost atoned for not having had a boy when she saw Katrinka's intense Van Kuyperishness, if I may so express it, and the entire family wondered at the obtuseness of the male race in general in remaining blind to the charms of this fifth Van Kuyper.

All the girls, except perhaps Lysbet, had inherited some of the dainty prettiness of their mother, to whom it was a heritage from her mother, who had been a very beautiful nobody, dating only from Colonial days, and whose exquisite portrait, hanging in an obscure corner of the great dining-room, was usually mistaken for a work of art. It seemed a sad comment on the taste of the average man that this pink-and-white daintiness was more attractive bait, matrimonially, than the shining knobiness of the true Dutch type.

The old homestead was a great, straggling Dutch farmhouse on one end and a conglomerate architectural puzzle on the other, representing three distinct eras, or, as an irreverent wag put it, three distinct errors.

The original Dutch homestead, modeled exactly after the Petrus Stuyvesant mansion on the "Bouwerie," soon proved too small for the prolific Van Kuypers, and an addition,

small but carrying out the lines of the old house, was added. Then came an unregenerate son who built out a wing decidedly Colonial in character, followed by a grandson who, the present generation was convinced, was mad, and who added a square box at one end topped with a mansard roof.

This same gentleman had gone even farther to send his name down the whispering gallery of ages in obloquy and disgrace. He had Anglicized the dear old family name into plain Kipp, dropping the precious Van, and had relegated the magnificently framed and blazoned coat-of-arms to the garret, replacing it with an engrossed copy of the Declaration of Independence. Fortunately for the salvation of the traditions of the Van Kuypers, the son of this degenerate developed a mania for restoration. The vulgar and hideous Kipp became again Van Kuyper, the Declaration of Independence changed places with the coat-of-arms in the garret, and he made a will with a clause providing a trust fund in perpetuity under which every baby born into the family and provided with a Dutch name was to be a beneficiary. So at every birth, family records were scoured and old Dutch histories reviewed in order to give a correct name to the blessed infant.

The old house as it now stood, covered richly with ivy and honeysuckle and at one end with a superb wistaria vine, presented a quaint and picturesque appearance, and was as comfortable within as it was queer without; withal it was so rich in tradition and history that it was almost as interesting as an old manorial English home.

This house, with a snug sum for its maintenance, had been heretofore entailed on the eldest son of each generation. The entail was now broken, and in old Mr. Van Kuyper was vested the power to nominate the heir. This was the bait offered to the daughter who could induce her husband to assume the family name.

Katrinka, then, was twenty-nine, short, stout, blonde and placid, worrying not a whit over her mateless con-

dition. Nevertheless, her sisters tormented her somewhat, their very pointed comments being frequently tipped with venom. Lysbet had grown absolutely personal in her allusions to her own early marriage. Christina had asked her, point blank, how it was she did not seem to "catch on." Christina had grown so vulgar since marrying that Smith! This was probably one of his horrid expressions.

Gertruyd, who had buried a Bilterken in the old family mausoleum on Staten Island, and was soon to espouse a Van der Linden, expressed her views in this wise:

"Well, truly, Katrinka, I don't think you realize how time flies. You are nearly thirty and have let all your best chances slip. You will take up with a crooked stick yet. It is time to *vous ranger*."

Mrs. Bilterken was one of those pretty idiots who can get any number of husbands and bury them only a trifle less cheerfully than they marry them.

Katrinka was quite willing to *ranger* herself, and looked pleasantly conscious at the allusion to her best chances. She had never had any, and Gertruyd knew it, but this was a little way she had of sandwicheing the bitter with the sweet, always endeavoring to give a wholesome lesson with a bit of flattery.

As for Janettie, the pretty hoyden at school—she called her sister "dear old Trinky" and "a nice old thing;" introduced her to her boy beaux as her "spinster sister," and reminded her continually that "when I am out you'll have to take a back seat, miss."

These little things were mere pin pricks, of course, but Katrinka was tired of being the family pincushion, and made up her mind that married she would be, and that without delay. While she did not possess a very brilliant mind, it had a certain tenacity of purpose.

She thought of every available man in New Haarlem, and reviewed his various qualifications, but finally

dressed for the great event of the season, the Knickerbocker ball, without having selected a victim.

II

THE Knickerbocker ball was the climax of the social season of New Haarlem. On this great occasion Lysbet's daughter was to make her first appearance in society, and so Janettie's début had been advanced a full year that they might make their social curtsy together.

Katrinka could not help feeling a certain disappointment that she was now handicapped in the matrimonial stakes by these romping young fillies. What show would she have, aged and carrying weight, to get under the wire ahead, with those slim, clever youngsters joggling her at every turn and relegating her to the heat and dust of the track while they hugged the rail?

So it was not in a very cheerful mood that she donned her black lace gown, instead of the white she had intended to wear. To the latter Janettie had strenuously objected. "Why, Trinky, you're years too old for white! Do you want to pass for a débutante? You will look an idiot. Besides, with your special shade of complexion—a kind of magenta, you know—black tones you down so."

Now certainly this was unkind of Janettie, but being the baby and the beauty, much was forgiven her, so Katrinka took the matter very meekly, and only cried a little in secret as she put away her white gown and arrayed herself in solemn black.

It was a satisfaction to her to realize that Janettie was right; black was becoming and made the brilliant whiteness of her really fine neck and arms more noticeable. When the thick hair was piled like a gold coronet high on her head and her "magenta" cheeks toned down by some judiciously disposed face powder, she experienced a certain pleasure as she gazed at herself in the mirror, and knew that she was really at her best.

Katrinka entered the ballroom mod-

estly behind her young and pretty sister, but with all the dignity of carriage befitting a Van Kuyper. The patonesses greeted her cordially, Lysbet looked her over approvingly, and her débutante niece, Miss Duvertie Van Hoesen, condescended to say "How very nice you look, Aunt Trinky!" This was all most gratifying, and Katrinka's pleasure deepened the color suffusing her cheeks and brow.

It was an unheard of thing in New Haarlem for any of the patriarchal family to lack partners. Not only the "deference due" assured them of proper attention, but also their many and liberal entertainments, to which no one would run the risk of forfeiting an invitation.

New Haarlem was very severe in its code of social ethics, and none dared trifle with it. It was one of those flourishing towns just too far from any great centre of commerce to attract the suburban dweller, and yet not so placed with regard to altitude or proximity to salt water as to attract the Summer tourist. It was beautifully situated in a fertile, rolling country, and was parted in the middle by a winding stream, which supplied power for its great mills and was an unending source of pleasure to its young people. The New Haarlemites were a proud and exclusive community. Newcomers, unless bearing the passport of friendship with one of the old families, were never encouraged to pitch their tents permanently among them.

The wealth of the Indies was no passport, nor was the poverty of Job a bar, providing always that one bore the genuine old Dutch hall-mark.

It was, therefore, with intense surprise that Katrinka, who after her third waltz was fanning vigorously and hoping her arms were not getting mottled, saw Lysbet approaching her with a young man not only a stranger, but, if looks proclaimed nationality, an Irishman. How very odd! What extraordinary combination of circumstances could induce Lysbet to smile and smirk so agreeably on this raw-boned, lank young man? She had

little time for speculation, for Lysbet was saying:

"Katrinka, I wish to present Mr. McGillicuddy, an old friend of Diedrich's."

Mr. McGillicuddy couldn't have been a very old friend of anybody's, for the thin line of down on his lip and his very frank young face proclaimed him not a day over twenty-three.

Mr. McGillicuddy was tall and very, very thin. His neck was long and showed two hollows in the back, between which the muscles bulged. He had been born, probably, before the appliance for holding back children's ears was invented, for his stood out each side of his head like the handles of a loving-cup, and were very pink at the tips, as if blushing at their undue prominence. His hair was sandy, his countenance of the simian Irish cast. His eyes, however, were very blue and clear, while round the corners of his mouth were humorous wrinkles and a lurking smile threatening to break out at the slightest provocation into a whole-souled and merry laugh.

Mrs. Van Hoesen went on, with a certain condescension in her tone: "Mr. McGillicuddy, Katrinka, has come to New Haarlem as assistant editor of the *Gazette*. Being a classmate of Diedrich's, I hope we can make his stay a pleasant one."

Katrinka smiled and assured the blushing youth she would do her best to this end. Her kind words and honest smile went right to the young man's heart. He had been having a very dreary time with all the stiff old Knickerbockers, and but for accidentally meeting Diedrich Van Hoesen would have hied him away on the first express from New Haarlem; but Diedrich, a very jolly, good-hearted boy, had insisted on his coming to this ball, and having got him there, had promptly forgot all about him till his mother called his attention to the lonely youth poking in a corner, looking wretchedly uncomfortable.

"By St. Nick—" the Vans all swore

by St. Nick—"I never gave him a thought! Take him to Aunt Trinky, mother, she's good-natured—" and mother had obeyed.

"Are you a classmate of Diedrich's, Mr. McGillicuddy? You look older." Score two for Katrinka. Really, this stout girl with the white shoulders was more angel than woman then.

"Oh, yes, some years. I was not a classmate, but we roomed in the same house and so grew somewhat chummy. It was like meeting a long-lost brother when I saw him on the street yesterday. I felt such a stranger in a strange land."

"We will cure you of that if you stay here long enough."

"You are the first person except Diedrich who has made me want to stay. New Haarlem is not very cordial to newcomers."

"No, I suppose not; we rather pride ourselves on our pride, you know. After to-night, however, you will see a change. Once admitted to the sacred precincts of the Knickerbocker your future is assured."

"Then, indeed, I am more indebted to Diedrich than I imagined. My social career here is eminently important to me."

"Then take my word for it that it is assured. If you have any lingering doubts ask me to dance, and if I accept you are a made man."

Mr. McGillicuddy laughed and gave the invitation in due form. Katrinka smilingly accepted, and as their eyes met she caught a look of genuine admiration in his blue orbs which thrilled her with its potentiality. He danced wonderfully well; he talked even better, with true Irish flashes of almost unconscious wit, and he paid Katrinka the homage of unremitting attention, so that when our mature and heretofore hopeless heroine was sinking into the lethe of virginal slumber, the last image on her mental retina was that of a red-headed young man, and her last conscious thought "Why not!" Why not, indeed?

Mr. Mike McGillicuddy asked himself practically the same question. Here was a girl with a line of an-

cestors as long as the Atlantic, with a comfortable fortune in prospect, and though certainly neither young nor pretty, deliciously plump. He adored plumpness, he was so execrably lean himself, and considering her family connections, especially her plutocratic and politically powerful brother-in-law Smith, there was no doubt he might do worse. Mike would not have been a true Irishman had not a political bee buzzed in his carrotty crop.

Michael worshipped lineage. His own, of course, he could trace right back to Brian Boru, but the estates were—well, mythical. Mike had a keen suspicion that his own kingly father had made the transatlantic trip between decks. He remembered a certain piece of *lignum vita* at home to which his father would point proudly as the staff that helped him on to fortune. It bore a strong family resemblance to a policeman's night club.

When Alderman McGillicuddy died he had the greatest funeral the Eleventh ward had ever seen—a gorgeous pageantry of woe, that sent delicious chills and tremors through the spine and marrow of every Irishman in the "deestrick." The hearse was drawn by four horses covered with black velvet palls embroidered in silver. The hearse itself bore eight great plumes, like a drum major's hat. The X. Y. Z. Society marched in a body all the way to Calvary, with green and gold sashes on their shoulders, and freshly ironed hats, preceded by the Irish flag and the Stars and Stripes, tied up with crêpe, the while muffled drums beat time to mournful Irish dirges. As for carriages, they had never been counted, but the widow was assured that when the stately hearse passed under the gateway at Calvary the last carriage was just leaving Brooklyn Bridge.

It was shortly after this proudly triumphant funeral march that Michael found himself thrown on his own resources. His father had made and spent money liberally. His shrewd old eye had detected promise in the

boy, and, as he said, he had "given Moike, be Jasus, the eddication of a gentleman," but the estate when settled up yielded only a small sum of ready money to each of the ten children and a modest competence to the widow.

Patrick, the eldest son, had no social ambitions, but was well equipped to put money in his purse, by fair means or foul. His father's business presented unusual opportunities for either method, so he bought it in, "iligrant mirrors and hardwood fixtures," cut glass and the most extended patronage in the ward, and soon showed the outward visible signs of prosperity in the best-fitting clothes and whitest diamonds he could buy.

Michael, who simply loathed the business and all pertaining thereto, carefully banked his few hundred and started out to conquer fame and fortune. Fame was not hunting him out very eagerly as yet, but Fortune, disguised as a stout young woman with ancestors and the prospect of a bank account, was smiling on him.

III

SPRING waxed into Summer with its usual precipitancy. Summer merged with dignified splendor into Autumn, and Michael and Katrinka saw each other daily. Some days it was only a nod and a smile, but more often there were long, quiet strolls through the fragrant woods, or delicious sails on the twisting river, or pensive evenings on the wide veranda. The old people had grown accustomed to the awkward boy about the house, and hardly gave him a thought, but Lysbet, Christina, Anneke and Gertruyd had put their heads together and talked the matter over.

"Diedrich says—" Diedrich's word was law to his mother—"that he's a very clever fellow and bound to make his mark."

"Like Bill Stumps, his mark," laughed Christina.

"Now, don't be frivolous, Chrissy; it's a very serious matter."

"So it is," said Christina—"for Katrinka. I don't see what business it is of yours." She still resented the interference in her own case.

"Only that it is certainly our business to see that Katrinka does not take a step she will regret. A sister's happiness is a very precious thing."

"Oh, very!" said Christina, mockingly. "My happiness was at stake when I insisted on marrying Jim Smith, and you all made such a row because he did not own a graveyard full of ripened ancestors."

"You are hopelessly vulgar, Christina," said Gertruyd, relict of Bilterken and prospective bride of Van der Linden. "I think it is very much our business. We—" this with a large capital W—"We who have done the family credit by *our* alliances have a perfect right to object to unknown and undesirable brothers-in-law. I'd like to know who Mr. McGillicuddy is, anyhow! Who was his father? What is his mother? Because Diedrich picks him up at college, where any scavenger's son may go who has the price, must we take him into the bosom of the family?" Gertruyd was getting excited.

Christina laughed. "If by the bosom of the family you mean Katrinka's, poor thing! she can't help his ancestry."

Mrs. Bilterken's vinaigrette became necessary. "You are simply atrocious, Christina!"

Anneke took up the cudgels. "Gertruyd is perfectly right. He's objectionable in every way. He's as ugly as an ape, and he hasn't any money; he hasn't any relations, and worst of all, he's Irish."

"Suppose he is ugly? Katrinka's no beauty, the Lord knows. As for not having any relations, that is the greatest blessing on earth. I wish to goodness Jim hadn't any."

Lysbet coincided with Christina. "I think Christina is quite right," she said, in her matronly way. "We can't expect Katrinka to marry as well as we have done. We have all, in fact, even Gertruyd and I, taken a step or two down socially, for we are

quite the oldest family in America. We shouldn't be too critical and exclusive."

"Oh, bother the family!" said Christina, the iconoclast. "What good do a lot of dead ancestors do anyone? I can't, for the life of me, see that it adds one cubit to one's stature, physically, mentally or morally; or that we are a bit cleverer, better or whiter than our neighbors because some remote grandfather with a statistical mind decided to keep the family records. I am glad that my young ones are Smiths and that there is no proof they ever had a paternal grandfather. Let Katrinka marry her Irishman if she wants to, and bring a lot of little Paddys into the world. That's her lookout, not ours. I should think you had all got a lesson to last you a lifetime when I married Jim in spite of you, and you see that now I have the best husband in the bunch and more money than any of you."

Lysbet's quiet voice interposed. "But the name! What about the name?"

"Oh, it is an awful name," groaned Gertruyd.

"Oh, I don't mean that—but can we persuade him to take Van Kuyper?"

A grim silence fell on the company.

"I suppose," said Lysbet, "this will be a very critical question to put to him."

"I think," said Christina, "we'd better wait until he asks her before we have a family row. There is no engagement yet, only philandering, and it may never amount to a row of pins."

"No," assented the colorless Anneke; "that is so. It's too bad he's years younger than Katrinka. If anyone is entitled to make a fuss, it seems to me it's his family, not ours."

"I don't believe he has any," said Gertruyd.

"Nor any ancestors, either. He has just growed, like Topsy, but he has growed considerable, and if Katrinka wants him, let her have him,

say I, even if he is as poor as a church mouse."

"Well, I do hope he'll do things properly," said Gertruyd, and then, with a solemn look of mutual understanding, she and Anneke took their leave.

IV

THE engagement was announced. Katrinka the plump and Michael the lean were formally affianced. All New Haarlem was agog. At last the old maid Van Kuyper was engaged. It was always a subject for general rejoicing when there was prospect of a marriage in the Van Kuyper family, for the old people gave their daughters imposing weddings.

The trousseau was the talk of months, and the linen and housefurnishings all came from the inexhaustible chests in the garret.

Mr. Van Kuyper, now nearly eighty, was contented with Katrinka's choice, but the sisters, even Christina, while delighted that Katrinka had secured a husband, were determined that the glory of family must be upheld, and that before the nuptial day two very important questions must be decided—would Michael assume the Van Kuyper name, and would the engagement ring be of befitting splendor?

No matter what might occur in stormy family meetings, however, to the world at large only satisfaction must be expressed, and in view of the important interests at stake, even Christina abated a trifle her attitude of lofty independence.

"I hope to goodness he knows enough to buy a decent ring," she said, surveying, with much complacency, the huge and brilliant gems on her own fat fingers.

This same thought was agitating them all, even to the exclusion of the more important question of name, though none expressed it quite so plainly. Even Katrinka was getting worried, for though the fateful question had been put and replied to some

weeks since, not a word as to a suitable *gage d'amour* had been breathed.

It was a cold and rainy afternoon, and the lovers had been together in the great library for some time, Katrinka thinking of her sisters' persistent questioning, and Michael oblivious of everything but a deep sense of personal comfort and his ladylove's soothing presence. Katrinka was in no sense exciting, and as she seldom volunteered a remark or ignited a new train of thought, it certainly startled Michael when she broke a long silence with:

"Oh, Michael, dear—" and then stopped short.

Here a sudden flare of the smoldering logs struck a flash of light from a very big and ugly seal ring that Michael was wearing, and at the same time projected a bright idea into her inner consciousness.

"Michael, dear, may I wear your ring? It is funny to be engaged and have no visible pledge."

"Why, my dear girl, it's miles too big! Do you want an engagement ring? I have always thought such things mere form, but you shall have one in a day or two, my dear girl."

"Of course I want one, you silly-billy! Not for the value of it—I've lots of rings now—but my sisters all have them, and it will always be the dearest thing in the world to me." This was true, for poor Katrinka was really in love with her ugly duckling, whose affection for her was not guiltless of a keen knowledge of the tidy little fortune she would one day inherit and the very substantial allowance old Van Kuyper had given to his girls on their wedding days—to all, that is, save Christina, whose plebeian spouse had declared he didn't "care a damn."

"What is your favorite gem, my darling?"

"Oh, anything you prefer."

"A diamond?"

"Entrancing, yes!—'a gem of the purest ray serene.'" When Katrinka took to quotation it was a symptom that her imagination was running riot.

She was exhilarated at having

brought Michael to the scratch, though she would not have expressed it in this way. Michael went home and spent a most rueful *quart d'heure* over his bank account, then, drawing a cheque for half the amount of his balance, sent an order to a firm of New York jewelers to send by express, "insured," six solitaire diamond rings of various sizes and values, his limit in price being expressed by enclosed cheque. Three or four days passed, and then the rings arrived and were sent to his fiancée, with a note begging her to choose and return the rejected ones.

Katrinka opened the box tremblingly, and within discovered six smaller boxes, each containing a ring. One by one she put them on; one by one she examined them; each ring bore a cabalistic numbered tag, of which Michael held the key, so price could not guide her. Then she put them all on at once, and then she put them all back in their little satin boxes, and concluded it was too grave a matter to trust to her own inexperienced judgment, and that she would call a family council to help her out. To this end Mrs. Van Kuyper was consulted.

"Mother, are you alone?"

"Yes, dear. What is it?"

Katrinka came in, solemnly closed the door and turned the key. Her mother looked rather alarmed at these proceedings.

"Don't be frightened; I only want your advice. See! Michael has sent me six rings to choose from, and they are all so lovely I can't make up my mind which one to keep."

For a long time the rings were examined and discussed, but no conclusion was reached. Sometimes the largest and sometimes the whitest caught her eye. Even the smallest elicited favorable comment, and at last her mother said:

"Suppose we ask the girls to judge?" Her daughters were still "the girls," to the old lady, and on their judgment she implicitly relied. Katrinka at once agreed to the suggestion, with the thought that in the

future no impertinent comment could be made if each of the sisters had a voice in the choice.

Even Janettie should have her say, so four little notes were despatched to the four married sisters to "come to mother's this evening at eight to decide an important question," and Janettie was verbally requested to be present at the council.

Katrinka felt that a critical moment was at hand. She took the precious box and its contents to her own room and locked it carefully in the chimney cupboard. This done, she sat down with true Dutch patience to sew on her wedding garments, weaving into each stitch loving thoughts of her dear Michael, who had come so generously and nobly to the front.

Evening finally arrived, and with it the sisters. Lysbet drove over from the Van Hoesen farm with Gertruyd, who was visiting her. Christina arrived noisily with a great rattle of silver-plated pole chains and a most effective short stop that nearly brought her fine blue-ribbon high steppers down on their haunches. Shortly after eight, Anneke, who lived round the corner, "ran in" in her tea gown, and Janettie, in great excitement, opened the door herself and ushered them all, with much *empresssement*, into the state drawing-room.

Mrs. Van Kuyper had made elaborate preparations for the council. Michael had been invited to spend the evening in the library with "father," and Wyntie, the Dutch housemaid, had been instructed to serve the schnapps and hot water kettle at nine o'clock. Every burner in the great crystal chandelier had been lighted and turned down, only a dim, religious light being left to permit the row of dead and gone Van Kuypers in their gilt frames to gaze solemnly and approvingly on their descendants.

Here also the living Van Kuypers beamed from huge canvases, each having been painted on reaching her twenty-first birthday. Lysbet was posed as Terborch's "Flute Player," Christina was obviously struggling to

hold up a huge 'cello, after Netscher's "Music Lesson," while Gertruyd, the lovely, simpered a long way after Saskia Van Ulenburch. Katrinka was really the image of Rembrandt's portrait of his first wife, Isabella Brandt, famed for her Dutch plainness of feature. Anneke was posed as a Dutch peasant in the picturesque costume made familiar by the portraits of Queen Wilhelmina, and Janettie, still in her teens, was absent.

The family assembled, no time was lost in useless chattering. Lysbet, as eldest, was spokeswoman.

"I am begged by Katrinka to say that she has asked us here in order to benefit by our advice in selecting her engagement ring. Janettie, you are the tallest, turn up the lights." The big crystal knob was turned, and instantly all five rows of burners flashed into flame that was reflected by hundreds of prisms in a glory of light that would have done credit to the dome of an opera house. The precious box was placed on a table under the chandelier, and Katrinka opened it, while the sisters crowded around, all expressing their opinions at the same time, so that only a confused jumble of words ensued.

"I think," said Lysbet, "we had better examine them separately." So the others sat down while Lysbet began her inspection. It was a tedious process, as Lysbet was critical, conscientious and slow, but she finally announced that her decision was made, and sat down.

Christina bustled up next. One by one she compared them with the rings on her own hands; before these headlights they were as the spark of a firefly under an arc light. Then she licked each one deliberately with her tongue, and finally, with an audible sniff, made room for Gertruyd.

Gertruyd insisted on having all the lights lowered, and then Lysbet and Christina, who hadn't thought of the darkness, must have another look; then all three whispered comments, looked unutterable things, and sat down solemnly.

Anneke had various different colored bits of ribbon to draw through the rings, one by one, and tried the effect of each. Janettie frankly admitted she knew very little about diamonds, but after scratching each one on the window pane to make sure they were genuine, announced:

"I think they are all just dears!"

Then there was a whispered consultation between Lysbet and Christina, and the latter said something to Gertruyd, which Gertruyd passed on to Anneke, who nodded a vigorous assent, and then Lysbet spoke:

"Katrinka, there is not a ring in the lot that one of us would wear. I hardly think Mr. McGillicuddy appreciates the honor you are doing him."

"Is appreciation measured by the number of karats in a diamond?" said Katrinka, hotly.

"These are all miserable little things," said Christina—"mere apologies. I am surprised at your giving them the slightest consideration."

"They are not as big as yours, but Michael is not a millionaire, like James."

"That is true," said Gertruyd, "but when a man marries a Van Kuyper he must expect to strain a point. One of these might have done for an O'Brien or a Donahue, but not for *one of us*. If he really can't afford a better one we might help him out! Anything for the credit of the family!" Gertruyd had such a clever way of implanting nasty little stings.

A general whisper of approval met this kind speech, no one noticing that Katrinka's eyes were getting wet.

"The honor of the family will be upheld, never fear. Michael only wishes to please me. He is all goodness and devotion. I shall ask him to come in."

Mr. McGillicuddy had spent a delightful evening. Age had not robbed Mr. Van Kuyper of his skill in mixing schnapps, and Michael came in flushed and happy at his fiancée's summons.

"Michael, we have examined the rings thoroughly, and think your jeweler has treated you abominably.

The largest stone is yellow and the purest miserably set, and one has a flaw visible even to us!" Thus Katrinka, gently breaking the news.

Christina, whose inbred bluntness had known no softening after years of plebeian association, said:

"Besides, they are all too small; mere chips. Just see the difference between them and the smallest of mine!" and she held them up for inspection.

Michael was feeling very mellow and generous, and so taking the box from Katrinka, he said, heartily:

"You shall have a diamond ring as big as a hen's egg if you want it. There! These go back to-night."

Even Gertruyd and Christina had to admit that he behaved handsomely, and Katrinka's delight was something wonderful to behold, wherefore what might have proved a most unpleasant ordeal turned out delightfully. Mysterious the ways of fate! The most powerful agents to this agreeable climax were a certain brown bottle and a very old, old gentleman's crafty manipulation thereof.

But for poor Michael there was a to-morrow, and though there is a popular notion that to-morrow never arrives, we have all been convinced of its fallacy by headaches or other woes. Michael fell asleep joyfully, with a tender farewell repeating itself in his mind and an altogether roseate view of the future filling his happily beclouded brain, but in the morning, as the immortal poet has it, "Oh, what a difference!"

His headache was by no means lessened by a rueful inspection of his bank account, followed by an inspection of his wardrobe. Michael had never been a vain man, and had so far been content to be clothed; now a necessity to be dressed arose. Two suits, both well worn, and his dress suit—fortunately new—were all he possessed. His credit at his tailor's, however, would provide for the outer man. But where should he raise the cash for the findings? A man could hardly be married with just a change

of shirts. It was a horrible problem, but Michael, with true Irish grit, faced it boldly.

"Here goes!" he said, with desperation, and drew a cheque for his last dollar, while he surveyed ruefully the collection of "mere chips" on his table, so scorned of the Van Kuyper clan. Michael began to have a suspicion that he was a fool. He was about to marry a woman older than himself, noticeably plain, and no prospect of inheriting a penny for years—for what? A will-o'-the-wisp called social position; in other words, to be snubbed and despised by people who hated his race and his humble beginnings, when he might have been a sought-after and respected personage in his father's ward. The son of the whilom policeman, saloon-keeper and Alderman shook his fist at his sorry reflection in the mirror, and said: "Mike, me boy, you've been a damn fool!" Fool or no, he was in for it now, so despatched the cheque, with the following brief and characteristic note:

MESSRS. GLITTER, GOLD & Co.

Dear Sirs—Box of rings returned to-day; most unsatisfactory. I enclose cheque for \$300 more, which add to previous amount, and send me at once one damn big diamond, and set in the latest mode—white, flawless and bright as h—!

Yours truly,

MICHAEL MCGILLICUDDY.

What the eminent firm thought of the queer note deponent sayeth not, but within a few days Katrinka's finger was adorned with a gem at which not even Christina could cavil.

Of course, it went through the same course of treatment. The great chandelier felt itself overworked by two such illuminations in one week, the family reassembled, the gas was turned down, candles were brought, all known tests were applied, and Michael and Father Van Kuyper, again mellowed by hot schnapps, were informed that the ring had passed inspection and was proudly accepted by Katrinka.

Michael, humbled by this ordeal

and by the fact that his bank account was *nil* and his prospects slim, fell an easy victim to the change of name. Old Mr. Van Kuyper, in his delight that at last the vexed questions of the name and homestead were settled, celebrated by so many glasses of schnapps that he was most grievously ill, and came near breaking up everything by inopportunately shuffling off his mortal coil.

The day before the wedding Diedrich Van Hoesen rushed into Michael's room with his usual impetuosity, and found that gentleman just strapping up his suit case.

"For heaven's sake, man, why don't you put all your things in your trunk?"

Michael, now Mr. Michaelis Van

Kuyper, by act of Legislature, replied, in some excitement:

"Me trunk, is it? This is me trunk!"

"Do you mean to say——?"

"I do mean to say that this is me trunk, and it contains me intire wardrobe and trousseau. Two pairs of socks—silk, be the grace of God—wan pajamas, ditto, and wan change of underwear. It took every penny I had in the world to buy that domned ring, and I am thinkin' me widdin' tower will be a carriage ride round the corner and back. It's a great thing to git married; it's a greater yet to marry a Van Kuyper, and the greatest of all to *be* a Van Kuyper! McGillicuddy I was born, Van Kuyper I die—the first case on record of an Irish Dutchman!"



THE FEMININE WAY

HOW is it, when a mother's life
Is passed in strenuous, irksome strife,
Corralling *partis* for her dears,
That she dissolves in bitter tears
When at the altar rail they stand,
And wipes her eyes with trembling hand?

Because next day you'll read—'tis inevitably expected—
An account of the old dame's dress, and how she was affected!



CONSTITUTIONALLY RELUCTANT

PARKER—I don't believe tramps have any conscience.
TUCKER—Yes, they have; but it won't work.



IMPRISONED LOVE

LOVE was unwilling with me to dwell;
So I barred him in, in a sumptuous cell.
This my mistake—poor Love sits sighing
And refuses his food; I fear he's dying.

E. D. P.

THE ROAD TO HELL

By Theodosia Garrison

NOW I had thought the road to Hell
A dread and dreary place,
With spirits fell to grin and yell
In each man's tortured face,
Who fain would slip from spur and whip
To weep a little space.

*Nay, he who told thee of this thing
Full loudly hath he lied;
The road is bright and rose bedight,
The way is fair and wide,
And Wit and Grace with smiling face
Walk with thee side by side.*

But I had thought the road to Hell
A crowded path and steep,
Where one must go in gloom and woe,
Nor pause to rest or sleep,
And though he sink have naught to drink
But tears his hot eyes weep.

*He lied who told thee of this thing!
The road is free as air,
And soft to tread as roses spread
When forth the bride would fare;
And sweet and fine the bread and wine
White hands shall serve thee there.*

But I had thought the road to Hell
To be a lonesome way,
Where all alone, as some dull drone,
One languished night and day.
Though others wore the path before,
They could not speak or stay.

*He lied who told thee of this thing!
On that fair road and free,
With laugh and song shall dance along
A goodly company;
And all above thy red-lipped Love
Walk hand in hand with thee.*

THE SMART SET

But I had thought the road to Hell
 Would echo with men's sighs,
 That through the night would burn the light
 Of women's tortured eyes,
 And rock and plain breathe back the pain
 And anguish of old cries.

*He lied who told thee of this thing!
 On that gay road and bright
 The sound of flutes and silver lutes
 Shall lure thee and delight,
 And suns by day shall pass away
 For love-white moons by night.*

Though I fear not the road to Hell,
 Wherein 'tis joy to wend,
 How shall it be with one when he
 Hath reached the journey's end,
 And out leaps Fear with shriek and leer
 His shrinking soul to rend?

*Nay, he who walks upon that road
 No fear may strike or fell;
 The clasp and kiss he would not miss
 Have bound him as a spell,
 And they alone nor cry nor moan
 Who walk the road to Hell.*



ALAS FOR ASPIRATIONS!

OLD GENTLEMAN—So you think my daughter loves you, sir, and you wish to marry her?

DUDELEIGH—That's what I called to see you about. Is there any insanity in your family?

"No, sir; and there's not going to be any."



OVERWHELMING CORDIALITY

"DO your country cousins treat you cordially when you visit them in the Summer?"

"Do they! Say, the minute I get there they make me take some elderberry cordial as a fatigue destroyer, then I have to drink some peppermint cordial for fear the water won't agree with me; next day they insist that I absorb some snakeroot cordial, to ward off possible chills and fever, and then I have to gulp down some liverwort cordial for the good of my system generally. Do they treat me cordially? By Jove, there's plenty of cordiality! I can taste it for months after!"

ALEX. RICKETTS.

THE WANDERING AMERICAN

By Mrs. Sherwood

THE criticisms on our new civilization, or lack of it, from the first Englishman with a grievance down to Kipling and Sir Lepel Griffin, including those dear friends, Mrs. Trollope and Dickens, besides acquainting us with some very valuable truths, have done us one incalculable harm; they have polished us down, as the lapidary brook polishes the hitherto well-shaped and eccentric pebbles into indistinguishable ovals—a great pity!

Now the Wandering American is no longer distinguishable from anybody else, except by the smartness of his women. The group around *paterfamilias Americanus* is always clean and well dressed for traveling—and that means properly dressed, what the French called "*bien mis*." The American women are very handsome and original, as a rule, but alas! those godly critics have rubbed them down. In this the Trollopes have been assisted by Henry James, whose best book was "*Daisy Miller*," an encyclical to his countrywomen. He has taught the American girl more how she looks to European eyes than has even Howells's "*Lady of the Aroostook*" and "*Ragged Lady*;" Howells has done much to corrupt their etiquette and encourage them in their mistakes, however.

Nothing remains to the Wandering American now but his speech; and Indiana and Illinois can be *heard*, if they are not *seen*. James Whitcomb Riley, master of dialect, has written a paper on the singular speech of his country, Indiana. He attributes it to the rifts of population which drifted in from Illinois and from Virginia, from New England, and from the

flatboat country, up and down the great rivers, all invalidated by a singularly dangerous catarrhal climate and by the ague, which has ever weakened the throat. President Harrison, most classic of orators, who himself spoke correctly, was very much alive to this peculiarity of his fellow "Gentlemen from Indiana," and now, as Booth Tarkington, one of the most successful of young novelists, lives there, we may expect another and more comprehensive essay on the subject.

Mr. Howells, in "*Ragged Lady*," has made a rather tiresome but very successful effort to spell out the rustic, second-class, New England lingo, the "shiftless pronunciation," as they would call it in Salem, the draggy drawl, the indifference to the letter r, the snubbing of the third syllable, the obliteration of the l, and the prefix of "Well!" to every remark. Doubtless in rural New York there is a *David Harum* class who murder their English as their forefathers exterminated the Indians. When he carries this conglomerate to Europe the Wandering American can be "spotted."

But in the matter of his hat he is monstrously like other people. Old Governor Robert Morris, of New Jersey, wore as a headdress for many years the skin of a loon with the feathers outside, but nowadays one fears that the brains of the loon may have gone inside the head. There is now only a very correct derby on the *outside*—a loss to the picturesque, so far as the Wandering American is described on steamships and in railway carriages. Even the beloved and graceful Vandyck soft felt of our most picturesque countryman, "Buffalo Bill,"

is not copied as it ought to be. It is the only thing I cannot forgive in Edward VII., that he did not make that beautiful hat the fashion. There was a moment when the *arbiter elegantiarum* drove down Piccadilly in an Alpine hat with an eagle's feather standing up on one side. It sold the soft, pretty, comfortable hat to a few copyists. But alas! the stovepipe held its own, and will always continue to disguise mankind.

Mrs. Trollope, whose lively book I have just re-read, was a good writer, but withal the most prejudiced and jaundiced author that ever attempted to describe a new country. However, she was a splendid reformer. She held the mirror up to nature in that distant and formative period when the smug New Englander did not venture as far as Cincinnati if he could stay at home in his comfortable New England. She caused cars and steamboats to be made more sanitary and comfortable. When we were wandering beasts she told us so. Yet she was not a particularly refined woman, nor were her sons after her. She had a grievance, and that inspires a writer, but she really was very just toward our great American faults of conceit and sensitiveness.

She hated to have the maid she hired say, "I am a lady, and I expect to be treated so;" but if Mrs. Trollope came back to-day and went to the fashionable watering place of Bar Harbor she could find a free-born American citizen chambermaid who would say the same thing and refuse to bring her a pillow extra. That infelicity of republics still exists in many places not far from the City Hall in New York.

The traveling American is, however, warned both by experience and books that he is watched with curious interest by all the Amalekites of fee collectors for those stray coins that he still scatters with more generosity than prudence over the arid plains of travel. In speech and in money-spending the American can still be discernible, and by reason of the dangerous beauty of his daughters he is

apt to be followed and bothered. "Hif I ketch any English loured follerin' my daughters, I'll whack him," remarked a very delicate-looking Indiana lady, in my hearing, one day at Nice. She pronounced the word *lord* as we do the name of that miracle-producing place near Pau, written Lourdes, and although this still very pretty, young-looking mother of two exquisitely beautiful creatures looked evanescent, she attacked and floored the English language as Mrs. Cleaver Hammer does the barrooms. There is a mighty power in the way certain Americans pronounce what they call the English language. Is it an effort to overcome the organic weakness of the throat, the catarrhal difficulty? The followers of Oliver Cromwell, born in the fens of Lincolnshire, all had colds in the head continuously. Hence the "nasal, psalm-singing Puritan" and the early Yankee pronunciation, now almost obliterated.

Mrs. Trollope served as a model to Dickens, who really copied very much from her. He did not take the trouble to see all the Eden he describes. *Jefferson Brick* he did see, and *Elijah Pogram*, and using the very same language which Kipling uses in beginning his description of San Francisco, that he was "angry at the violation of copyrights," he proceeds to write the most amusing book of misinformation that the traveler can buy. And at the same time these books are full of truths—they have helped to make the great West what it is, a land of luxury and refinement, worthy of its immense gifts of nature, worthy of its splendid prosperity. Its Ghengis Khan, its Aladdin, its magicians, its millionaires, its beautiful women, can well afford to have been abused and to be now patronized by *Punch*, for the good these jaundiced English writers did them in pointing out their faults.

Sir Lepel Griffin wrote from such a spleenful attack that we can hardly touch his book except to throw it over the hedge. One is reminded of that careful Scot who would not speak the name of the Father of Lies; "but,"

said he, "I have a friend who is personally acquainted with him, and he says he is a very agreeable gentleman." I do not doubt that he is. From Marie Corelli's "Sorrows of Satan" I have formed a very favorable opinion of his manners, poor old Satan!

Sir Lepel abuses his friend and fellow-countryman, Matthew Arnold, quite as much as he would if he were an American. As the much abused would-be lover of a pretty American once said to her, "You could not treat me worse if I were your husband," so Sir Lepel belabors every American idea, plan, city, person and institution. His book is cleverly written, strong, and good for one in the Spring, like boneset tea. But it has been like many of the waves of the lapidary brook, too efficacious; we are getting rubbed too smooth. We have a wealth of temperament; we have strength and power to spare; we would better keep some of our eccentricities. We are the richest people in the world as well. Poor Mr. Carnegie! Has he found a place to hide in—some endless contiguity of space?

Here, again, is an example of the wealth of man represented in the faculty of one individual. Every American thinks he can be as rich as Mr. Carnegie and give away thirty millions a year to earn the bliss of dying poor. However, that latter clause comes too easy to some of us.

Emerson describes the Englishman as a king in a plain coat. Since he wrote that, *Punch* has given Uncle Sam a new suit of evening clothes and makes him dance with a princess. But the hands and feet of the chimpanzee still stick out. *Ex pede Herculem!*

Whether the Wandering American travels for society, for access to means of science and study, or for mere pleasure, if he goes armed with an education, the certainty of good blood in his veins and wealth, he knows that he needs no flourish of trumpets. Perhaps Mrs. Trollope has made it plain to him that boasting is an American defect, and now he is no longer

"spread-eagle." She says, in one place: "To me the dreary coldness and want of enthusiasm in Americans is one of their *greatest defects!* I therefore hailed the demonstrations of popular feeling on their Fourth of July with *real pleasure*. On that day the hearts of the people seemed to awaken from a three hundred and sixty-four days' sleep. They appeared high-spirited, gay, animated, social, generous, or at least, *liberal in expense*; and could they but refrain from spitting on that hallowed day—that is to say, on the Fourth of July—they would at least *appear* to be an amiable people." Kind Mrs. Trollope! Surely one word of approbation from Sir Hubert Stanley is praise indeed!

Perhaps it may be asked, "Why do you waste so much time on a foolish, rather vulgar old woman of the English middle class who visited Cincinnati in 1830, before any of us were born?"

Simply because she was the type and model of every writer whom England has sent over here since, inspired by the same prejudices and dislikes, telling the same fibs. Mrs. Trollope has been the great "Apostle to the Genteels," making us more "genteel"—heaven forgive me for the word!—and she has also invited us to a coming danger, the rubbing-down process, the making of us over into the same commonplace rotund pebbles, just like everybody else.

She says one thing about the women which Time has so unsaid for her that I must quote it: "It is true the women have but little to do with the pageantry, the splendor or the gaiety of the day (the Fourth of July) but setting this defect aside, it was a glorious sight to see a jubilee so *heart-felt as this*." I think women do generally go out of town on the Fourth of July, but on other occasions they have everything to do with the pageantry, the splendor, the gaiety and the money-spending of America. One of Mrs. Trollope's most sapient remarks was to the effect that "there are reasons why a very general diffusion of literature is im-

possible in America." So Kipling says also: "They are all too actively employed to read anything—except the newspapers!"

We must remember that Washington Irving and Cooper, Bryant and Bancroft, Channing and Emerson were writing most popular and not yet forgotten books when this first critic, with Captain Basil Hall, was trying to run us down. We can forgive them now, because the fact remains that they did tell us of the evident faults in our manners; they did correct our bumptiousness, and they have perhaps improved our speech, although as a national defect that can still be improved.

"By jiggers!" said a young Oxonian in the train with me one Summer in Savoy, "I'll be jiggered if that pretty girl ain't an American!"

"How do you know?" asked his friend; and we were all anxious that this pride of the English university should not be "jiggered."

"I know it by her voice and that awful accent," he said; "such a beastly accent!"

Most English critics declare that we Americans talk of our "divine political institutions." I never happened yet to meet an American who did not abuse the opposite party, particularly if it was in power at the time.

It has become the useful fashion for a number of young girls, matronized perhaps by one a little older, to travel over Europe very cheaply, for purposes of study and sight-seeing. It is a most commendable curiosity that sends these young women abroad. They come home vastly enlightened. If they choose to stay as newspaper women or artists, or simply as bachelor maids, no one can say a word about them. The worst that can befall seems to be that they do not find very comfortable quarters in the cities where they must eat and sleep, even when looking at Notre Dame. However, a great city that undertakes to feed people with slender purses has all sorts of caravansaries. They do not suffer as St. Louis and his crusaders suffered at Acre. The world has softened since

1248. Yet the eleven thousand virgins who wander over Europe sometimes complain that they have met the Tartar army and have not driven them back. Terrifying tales of the appearance, numbers and ferocity of female boarding-house keepers—women who neither take nor give quarter—follow the wanderers home. Indeed, the avarice of a certain class has made traveling for these economical girls a very painful experience, although there are few dangers in their pathway, and Cook, that universal soother of travel, can always suggest a way out of the difficulty. Even in Spain, a country proverbially three thousand years behind the rest of Europe, there is a great change for the better now that French railroads and Cook tickets and Swiss landlords are distributed through its picturesque defiles.

The American soldier and sailor, wherever he wanders, is now recognized as a hero. This is the time for him to travel. He can go as Nelson traveled after the battle of the Nile, a creature to be cheered and applauded, honored by kings, worshipped by women, and admired of all people; for the love of courage never dies, and hero worship is inherent in us all.

It is a thousand pities that we have no types. The Irish girl still goes to Ballyshannon Fair in her jaunting-car, the Irish lad swings his shillelagh, the English rough is a perpetual *Bill Sykes*, the Spanish landlord with his handkerchief tied round his head is the same man who cooked the *olla podrida* for *Sancho Panza*. But the Yankee landlord who afforded witticisms for *Sam Slick* is now a Member of Congress, with a careful cutaway, immense standing collar, neat black necktie and one stud in his immaculate shirt. How can you get any fun out of such a fellow? You can get a moderately good dinner out of him, but not such a good one as his father served in his shirt sleeves to your father fifty years ago. When his son goes to Europe it is impossible to tell him from a "lourd"—he has the

same reserve, the quiet manner, the feeling of certainty that he will do the right thing! He is a pebble that has been rubbed too smooth.

As for those types that Mark Twain presented in "The Gilded Age," the cheerful visionary who saw "millions in it" proved to be right. The rainbow-tinted bubbles all had millions in them. And *Colonel Sellers* has been the successful man. He is now to be kneeled unto; he is the great much-begged-of. Not so amusing as when he was selling his eye-water; prosperity has tipped him over into a sad, silent man, almost as melancholy as an English peer, and even if he wears a better hat than Lord Salisbury he looks almost as discontented. Is there something catching in English ennui? It is very stylish.

The negro and the Indian are still available for stage purposes, and they do a little service in the novel; but the native American is as extinct as the dodo. As for the American women, they are so adaptable and so imitative that were it not for their very good looks and taste in dress they might be anybody—German *Fraus*, Spanish gypsies, French *demoiselles*. What would Shakespeare have made of the material offered by America? What would *Malvolio* have turned out? The adviser of a President, perhaps. We could give him *Hotspur* in our Vice-President, and plenty of potent, grave and reverend seignors. But have we a *Hamlet* among us? or a *Falstaff*? We have *Coriolanus* and *King Henry the Fifth*, but no *Touchstone*, or *Gravedigger*, or *Launcelot Gobbo*, or *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, or *Romeo*! Alas the day! *Autolycus*, that thief and liar—I am afraid we have him. Old *Adam*, type of faithful service, him we have not. But *Portia*, fair and learned; *Rosalind*, the capricious; *Viola*, image of beauty and spirit; *Isabella*, dignified and saintly—with all these we could accommodate him. This is the season when they are flying over Europe, now going from Paris to Vienna in sixty hours, more or less, stopping, perhaps, at Homburg, where, alack, there is no

Prince to flirt with! The elevation from Prince to King has eclipsed the gaiety of nations. We are all astonished at the difference it has made at Nice and Monte Carlo. And now our lover, *Romeo*, if he is alive, is looking for an American heiress. Neither he nor *Lorenzo* has any time to stop and bother about the moon.

One American peculiarity has not left our American—"he still hurries" too much. "Show me everything you have got here in five minutes," he demands. He still regrets the lack of his American elevator in Europe. But he enjoys a French dinner and the soft air of Italy and its delicate wines. He is fond of fun, and as a national type he is very fond of his wife. Only there are exceptions.

His wife has a "good time." It is the wandering American woman who loves Europe. She knows very well how to appropriate its artistic treasures. She has an eye to the Campanile and Giotto's Tower. She remembers her Lemprière, and knows that Ganymede was a boy. She also has a very clever knack at language; and oh, she buys such gowns, sings so well and dances such a way! No sun on an Easter day is half so fair a sight, and she carries with her much of her American oxygen. What with her vivacity, sparkle, and now her immense height—for we are raising a crop of asparagus girls, who shoot up in a night, splendid *Glumdalclitches*, many who top six feet; "divinely tall and most divinely fair" young goddesses, Dianas and Junos, Atalantas flying over the plain—the young American woman is indeed a type to be proud of. The wonder is—and still the wonder grows—how she can be so tall and still be so attractive.

The Wandering American gets all of Europe's best. He is the honey-bee, stealing honey from every opening flower, and no doubt he rejoices that he is no longer slick *Sam Slick*, Uncle Sam, the Yankee, the marked and peculiar being whom Captain Basil Hall, Mrs. Trollope, Dickens and Kipling have painted him.

The Wandering American starts

first for London—or has done so heretofore—if he leaves New York in April or May. This year there will be no Royalty receiving. The Court functions are of course deferred until the decent period of mourning for the Queen shall have been observed. They have sent the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall off to foreign ports, poor little Royalties! They will not see a Summer for two years.

His Majesty, of course, cannot hold Court, and Her Majesty does not love the slavery, so they say. This will put an end to the chief ambition of the American woman, which is to be presented. But London is still there, the place where the heart of the universe beats loudest, the place best worth seeing in this world. The Wandering American already knows it well, if he has traveled, but the new Wanderer would better learn it in the Summer, when he will not be distracted by the anxieties of social precedence. Rural England is a thing of beauty, and no Summer is mispent that is given to England alone.

The Wandering American loves Paris and the Continent. This Summer, after a severe Winter and the severer shock to the people who expected to make eternal fortunes out of the Exposition and did not, will be a good time to see Paris. Prices will not be high and cabdrivers will not be *cochons*.

The month of August at Homburg has heretofore been the dear delight of the Wanderer who expected to meet the Prince of Wales at that gay and cosmopolitan watering place. Alas! there are no more cakes and ale for him. He has, it is said, done much flirting there in his salad days with fair Americans. He is now relegated to the gloomy solitude of a throne.

The quiet German watering places all have their quota of princes and grand dukes, who are admired and courted by the Wandering American. "One goes to Aix-les-Bains to be washed, to Schwalbach to be dried and ironed," say the London physicians.

Perhaps of all the cures Aix-les-Bains is the gayest, the prettiest, the most convenient and the one nearest to Switzerland, being only two hours from Geneva. Parties are thus continually being made up, to vary the tediousness of the baths, to Mont Blanc, to Interlaken, to the lesser baths of Evian, which is a gay little French place. Or going in the other direction, one has all the charms of Savoyard scenery. Here always congregate the English and Italian aristocracy and the French *demi-monde*, the gamblers and the kings. So one has a large party to choose from. The hotels are perfect. For ten francs a day, wine included, the hungry man gets the best dinner in Europe, and the ladies of his party see the best Parisian fashions, a number of kings out of business, and some who are still at the old stand. Very pretty are the hats, and one can buy the best gowns and gloves in all Europe very cheaply there. Grenoble, where gloves are made, is just over the mountain. Such drives! such nightingales! such actors! Coquelin, for instance, cannot be had for the asking anywhere else. The climate is paradisiacal, with every convenience for health and pleasure. And such delightful music, such admirable dancing, and the Parisian stage brought down bodily! Also a great deal of shopping is possible in curios, old jewelry, bric-à-brac. One can get rid of a great deal of money there without gambling, which is a kind of blood-letting the American loves. From Aix one can go to the Grande Chartreuse over the most romantic carriage drive in Europe. There is an old American brother there who will not die. When the brothers pass him, saying, "*Mes frères! il faut mourir!*" he answers, "No, you bet!"

The English ladies wear plain clothes at Aix. Sometimes they think the American smart set is too smart. However, they all go off together in shabby carriages, dine together at a neighboring *auberge*, *sans gêne*, and have a good time, or drop in at the Casino, see the last play or opera, and perhaps take a perfectly virtuous

squint at the gambling. No bitter east wind has ever visited Aix; so rheumatic folk love it. Then when one leaves, the Italian lakes are most convenient, and if one is not happy there he does not deserve to be happy anywhere.

One can go through the famous Mont Cenis tunnel to Turin, and come back again to Aix. One is always so glad to come back to Aix from anywhere. At the Europe, at the Grand Hôtel d'Aix, at the Splendide, the comforts are very great. Then, to have coffee out of doors, to hear a passing strain of music, to look up at a snow Alp, with a variety of companionship in the amusing cosmopolitan crowds, the glimpse of famous people—all is a condensation of travel which the Wandering American enjoys. One does the grand tour without buying a railway ticket, simply by staying at Aix-les-Bains.

The Wandering American is very pleased with Italian ways. The nobility have the most simple and charming manners. They never tell you disagreeable truths, which Anglo-Saxons feel it their duty to tell you. One sees the Italians of the best class at

Aix-les-Bains even after the sweet spot has put on its Autumnal livery, when it is more lovely than words can express in its reds and yellows, and the purple shadows flit over the needle-shaped peaks.

From Aix to everywhere is only a day, or at most two days. Even Venice, that delight of the world, is not much farther. "*Con viso che tacendo dicea, taci!*" One loves those stone balconies outside Daniello's, there to sit and dream of Venice and her old renown and watch the busy life of the quay; to wonder, to admire, to dream, to rest, and to enjoy silently. Venice has fused all ideas in her own overflowing fancy, and the Wanderer feels inclined to apotheosize the wondrous town, "that city which, though flooded, utters no cry for help," as he lies back on the cushions of his gondola and floats past her wealth of Gothic, Moorish and Byzantine palaces, her churches in the Renaissance and Italian Gothic, her beautiful palace of the Doges, her San Marco, her statue pillars with the saint and the lion, and crowning all, more lovely than all, her Campanile, rising above the city like a glorified spirit of peace and repose.



PRESERVING THE PROPRIETIES

"THE idiotic, stupid man!"—
 She stamped her dainty toe—
 "He begged for just a single kiss,
 Just as he rose to go;
 And naturally, then, of course,
 I had to answer, 'No.'
 It was not such a strenuous task—
 Whatever made the idiot ask?"



ALL A MISTAKE

BELLE—Do you think the world is growing better?
FLORA—I thought so, my dear, until I married George to reform him.

A WOMAN

GOD, when He made you, made a flower—
 Exquisite, wonderful—and then
 Gave you the highway for a bower
 Crossed by the trampling feet of men.

The dust, the grime He bade you feel,
 Yet let naught mark your purity;
 He made you know the crushing heel
 Yet bear no stains for men to see.

What wormwood dews were food for you
 He knows, who bade you for a jest
 Give of your poison to that true,
 Poor fool who loved you best.

And so your eyes are like the eyes
 Of one who sees some holy thing;
 How could I guess them otherwise
 From sight of sin and suffering?

And so your mouth is like the rose
 A child might lay at Mary's shrine;
 How could I guess what dregs of woes
 It tasted ere I made it mine?

JOHN WINWOOD.



PAID FOR ITSELF

LENA—Jack told Bessie she looked sweet enough to kiss in her new hat.
 BELLE—Well, did he kiss her?
 “I suppose so. She said the hat was worth every cent she paid for it.”



REAL REFORMATION

CARRIE—Mr. De Sappy has quit smoking—quit for good.
 FLORENCE—He burned up his pipes, did he?
 “Oh, he didn't use a pipe, goosie. He quit cigarettes and burned up his clothes.”

OF MANY, ONE

By Baroness von Hutten

"I AM trying to get just enough coffee, Uncle William, to kill the taste of the goat's milk, and just enough milk to kill the taste of the chicory."

Mr. Elliott laid down his letters and looked up. "The coffee is infernal!" he said.

Miss Whiting took a piece of toast and looked at it reflectively. "Whom is your letter from?" she asked.

"My letter is from your prince. Where is your mother?"

"My mother is where she always is at this hour—in bed. And might one ask what my prince has to say?"

"Here—read it yourself."

Handing her the letter, he turned his chair around with a hideous squeak on the oiled bricks of the terrace and looked down at the highly colored scene before him.

He watched the boats swaying on the brilliant water, and then as his niece did not speak, turned and looked at her.

She had laid the letter down and was stirring her goat's milk and chicory absently.

"Well?" he asked.

Then Miss Whiting laughed. She was, unlike most beautiful women, more beautiful when she laughed.

"If I do, are you prepared to treat me with proper respect?"

"And *do* you?"

"Would you?"

"I don't know; what would your mother say?"

"Oh, mamma, Uncle William! Tell me, what do *you* think?"

The brown of her eyes was amber as she looked at him.

"What do I think, Win? He's hand-

L. of C.

some, hard up, and rather fast. What more could a reasonable American girl want?"

She laughed again. "And a prince!"

"And a prince." His eyes were half-closed in laughter, yet she felt their keen interrogation.

"I wish I were a queenly being in one of Dicky Davis's novels—he always arranges such matters with so much grace."

"But you're not, Win, and you've got an awful lot of money in your hands, my dear. Think well."

She nodded, thoughtful. "Yes, I must think well. I suppose—indeed, I know—that he needs my money. That dear old palace is half in ruins, and the Government wants to buy the pictures. It would be a great pity—"

"My dear child!" Mr. Elliott rose emphatically. "If you know the fellow is after your money, and if you are not a driveling idiot—"

"I think I'm not a driveling idiot, but—I am a moneybag, Uncle William; I am also a very nice girl, and it is at least possible—now *isn't* it?—that he might like *me*, too."

She rose, and pulling down a long spray of red-and-white-striped roses from the trellis, broke off a cluster and arranged them in her belt.

"Liking you isn't enough, Winifred. It is none of my business, but I should say, most decidedly, not enough. A man may, of course, fall in love with a girl who has money, but—and then—"

She smiled down at him. "You mean about the Marchesa Belfiore?"

"Yes. If I were you, my dear, I'd

ask my mother," he urged, feebly, lighting his pipe.

"Oh, no, you wouldn't. If you were me—I—you'd decide for yourself—myself—"

Then she went in and left him alone to grumble over the Paris edition of the *Herald*.

II

TEODORO ARIBERTO, Duca di Altamura and Principe di Santa Giulia, sat down in the cool, green twilight of Mrs. Whiting's salon and looked about. The room was strange to him, but several things in it were familiar—an oblong box of Capo di Monte, a green leather portfolio, several photographs and a heap of silk cushions on the divans.

He drew a deep breath. These odds and ends that he had known in Rome were somehow a comfort to him, and he needed comfort, for he was nervous.

A strong smell of heliotrope came in at the open window, and down on the lake someone was singing "Dormi Pure" in a sweet, clear voice.

Santa Giulia rose and closed the window; the song had unpropitious associations for him.

As he resumed his seat she came in.

He rose again and bowed low. She liked the bow European, in contradistinction to the jerk Anglo-Saxon; and she liked the fit of his clothes and his well-groomed black hair, which was brushed back from his forehead and waved a little before its career was checked by the shears.

"Miss Whiting," he began, "you are very kindly to receive me."

Being a young woman who disliked useless words, she merely bowed, and he went on.

She sat by the window, and the green glow from the closed blinds threw into relief the beauty of her clean-cut profile and of her shapely head, with its air of distinction. As the man talked he watched her and wondered. Her simplicity, both as to manner and clothes, was so differ-

ent from the simplicity of Italian girls.

"In short," he said, after a brief preamble in his careful English, "I have the honor, signorina, to ask you to be my wife."

She did not answer at once; she was staring steadily at the rings on her slim hands.

At length she looked up. "Prince," she began, "what I am going to say will surprise, perhaps shock you; but this is a very serious matter for us both—"

His slight gesture was all the response necessary, and she resumed:

"Since I met you that night at the Duchess's ball you have gone wherever I went, you have danced with me—you have, in short, in the Italian way, paid me serious attentions."

"Yes."

"And," she continued, calmly, but without looking at him, "you have, without speaking the words, told me a dozen times that you—love me. Am I not right?"

"Signorina, you are very beautiful. What could a man but love you?"

"Ah!" She took up a photograph from the table and studied it closely for a moment. "And now—to-day—you have asked me to marry you. Am I to understand that—you love me?"

She raised her beautiful, candid eyes to his, and he turned away.

"*Mademoiselle, pouvez-vous en douter?*"

"*Je ne m'en doute de rien—je demande.*"

He rose. "Miss Whiting," he answered, his accent intensified by his confusion, "I ask you to be my wife. Is that not enough?"

"I quite appreciate the honor you do me, Prince. But—if I were poor would you have asked me to marry you?"

He suppressed a smile. "You are very young, dear miss; you have a right to be romantic. I am thirty-five, and I am not romantic any more, *hélas!* But I will answer your question. You are beautiful and charming enough for all, but—I am a poor

man, and if you, too, were poor I could not have asked you to be my wife."

"You are clever, and you evade my question. I understood that much before. And that you love your old home, and your beautiful old palace, I understand that. What I want to know, what you must tell me, is this: Is it my money you want, or me?"

And he lied. "It is you!" he said, softly.

Her cheeks glowed suddenly, she started up, and then with an effort turned to the window.

"And the Marchesa Belfiore?" she said.

"The Marchesa Belfiore?" he stammered. "I don't understand you."

"People say," she answered, speaking very distinctly, "that you love her and that she loves you."

"*Per Bacco, signorina!* You have said me the catechism, and I have answered patiently, but *jeunes filles* do not ask men about their friendships with married women."

She had grown very pale, but she faced him bravely. "I know, Prince; but American girls are not like your *jeunes filles*. We read, you know—and I'm twenty-three. Why shouldn't I hear what is said of you and Madame Belfiore? I know her, and I like her, and if you and she love each other I am very sorry for you both. Only—

I cannot marry you in that case. Do you understand?"

"And if I told you that it is not true, what one says?"

"I should believe you."

"And if I told you that it has been true, but is not—shall not be any more?"

She hesitated. Then she rose and held out her hand. "I will leave it to you. If you can tell me, on your word of honor, either that you never loved her or that you no longer love her—then I will marry you, for—I like you, Santa Giulia."

He took her hand and looked at her. He knew what it meant, her "I like you, Santa Giulia."

The singing on the lake had recommenced, and in the dusk the odor of flowers seemed accentuated.

"Miss Whiting," he said, slowly, "I wish I could tell you a lie, but—God knows why—I cannot. I ruin myself. I like you and admire. I should like the Santa Giulia of *l'avenir* to have had such an ancestress, but—I cannot lie to you. I love Maria Belfiore, and I always shall love her."

His eyes gleamed with tears as he bent and kissed her hand.

"Thank you," she said. "I thank you with all my heart, and—good-bye."

Then he went, leaving her in the sweet, dusky room, alone.



FLY ADVICE

HE—I'm fishing for a wife.

SHE—Well, you'd better sign the pledge first, Mr. Clovenbreath. I fear you are using the wrong kind of bait.



THE WORST OF THE EVIL

BROOKS—Money makes fools of some people, you know.

CROOKS—Quite true, but that wouldn't be so bad if they would get over it when their money is gone.

VOX ET PRÆTEREA NIHIL

SHE had a voice so wondrous sweet
 They always begged her sing;
 To listen was a perfect treat,
 But she—the dainty thing—
 Would then express entire disgust,
 And rise in manner slow,
 Exclaiming: "If I must, I must;
 I wish I needn't, though!"

At concerts, when her help they sought,
 She stamped and cried: "Dear me!"
 Although the audiences thought
 No Melba sang as she.
 She designated all applause
 As quite a "dreadful bore,"
 And wished that there were stringent laws
 Preventing the encore.

At length one of her ardent friends—
 She was to sing that night
 Suggested: "When her song she ends,
 We'll do what she thinks right;
 She always has expressed her views
 That encores cause her pain;
 Let us her goodness not abuse,
 Nor make her sing again."

The first song o'er, as usual, she
 Prepared to be encored,
 But all refused religiously,
 As if her efforts bored.
 I cannot tell the reason why
 Or wherefore yet—except
 That straightway she sat down to cry,
 And wept, and wept, and wept!

C. F. R.



ON THE DAY OF REST

MRS. BROOKS—My husband is of a retiring disposition.
 MRS. RIVERS—He attends church, does he not?
 "Yes; but he drops off to sleep as soon as he gets there."

THE MIDNIGHT MATCHMAKER

By Gelett Burgess

"SEE here," said the man in the Inverness cape, "do you mean to accuse me of breaking my glasses on purpose? You evidently don't know what a serious thing it is to be near-sighted."

The girl drew her opera-cloak about her shoulders and adjusted her hat, which was somewhat awry, before the mirror. Then she pulled her veil down smoothly about her chin and looked round. "Well, I don't know that you're quite clever enough for that, but it's rather suspicious," she said.

The young man was evidently in no hurry to leave the room. He leaned back in the armchair and popped his crush hat. Then he said, after a prolonged stare at the carpet: "Why?"

"You *said* you only wanted to run up here for a moment to get another pair of glasses, but you've kept me here half an hour, on one pretext and another."

"Haven't you had a good time?" he asked, without looking at her.

The girl made a little mouth and shrugged her shoulders. "So-so," she said. "Of course, I was very anxious to see your rooms, after all I've heard about them, and they're really very prettily fitted up. But you might have invited me to come up here some time with a chaperon. Mrs. Hewlitt would have been glad to take me."

The young man smiled grimly. "If you had waited for me to invite Mrs. Hewlitt, you'd have waited a long time," he said.

"Of course, it's a lark to come up alone," said the girl, as if she felt the

necessity of apologizing for her presence, "and if you hadn't taken advantage of it, and tried to kiss me, it would have been awfully jolly. But now I feel so horrid and common and guilty I can't enjoy it any more, and I'll hate to remember it, even. You ought to have known me better! I suppose you thought that if I'd come up to your rooms— I wonder what you *did* think! You have spoiled the whole thing now, and I'm worried about getting home. Come, we must go. I'd die if anyone found it out."

"No one's going to find it out," said the young man. "What are you afraid of, Millie? We've only to jump into the cab at the door, and no one can possibly see us. You know you can trust me, don't you?"

"If I didn't, do you think I would have come?" said the girl, proudly. She turned to go out, but her eyes still wandered about the room, examining the bric-à-brac, until suddenly the clock rang. "Good gracious! eleven o'clock!" she cried, and ran over and plucked at his sleeve. "Come, Oliver," she said, anxiously; "hurry, or they'll wonder where we have been so long."

Oliver rose reluctantly, with something apparently still unsaid. "It's too bad!" he complained, as he drew on his gloves. "These conventionalities are too absurd to be endured. I'd like to know what's the difference between your calling on me in my room and my calling on you in yours! There's nothing wrong about your being here, Millicent, and you know it!"

"Well, it isn't *your* fault that there isn't," she said, significantly.

Oliver sighed, and then lighted a candle at the gas fixture. "I suppose I know what you mean," he said, sadly. "You're letting me down easy, that's all. You know very well why I wanted to kiss you, and why I still want to. It's no foolishness; I'm in earnest!"

It was very evident that she did know what he meant, for his remark seemed to make her still more anxious to get away and change the conversation as well as the scene. The visit had amused her, but the striking of the clock made her nervous. It was on her lips to say, "Well, what *did* you mean?" and have it over, but she decided to wait until they were safe in the carriage. She opened the door suddenly and was about to step into the hall, but she fell back with a little suppressed scream of terror. Directly confronting her stood a man with a lantern and a revolver. He, too, drew back for a moment, and then advanced, with a threatening gesture.

His calling was sufficiently evident to the two by his stealthy attitude and the pistol, which he held pointed ready to fire. At his startling and unforeseen presence, so malignly aggressive, the two retreated into the room, now lighted only by the wavering light of the candle Oliver held, at a loss what to do in this dangerous emergency. The burglar, however, quickly instructed them.

"Hands up, quick, now!" came from between his teeth. "Don't stir, or I'll settle for you both!"

Oliver's wits came back to him, and regardless of the consequences, he was about to spring at the man, when Millicent laid a hand on his arm. "Stop!" she cried; "for heaven's sake, don't touch him, or he'll shoot! Think of me! What shall I do, if there's trouble here?"

The young man, baffled and furious at the suppression of his attack, fell back, seeing the force of her appeal. His hands were, indeed, tied by her presence. The burglar, too, was not slow to realize the situation, and grinned wickedly.

"So that's yer little game, is it? I'm afraid I interrupted a quiet little call, eh? You weren't expecting company, eh?" and he seemed mightily to enjoy their plight. "Sorry I intruded, miss, but biz is biz, and I thought it was this gent's night out!"

"See here," Oliver interrupted, "I'll give you just five minutes to get out of this, and I'll promise not to follow you up. Clear out of this now, and next time you come I'll be ready for you!"

"Go, go!" cried Millicent, on whose nerves the tenseness of the scene was exerting itself.

"Much obliged for this entoosiasitic reception," said the burglar. "They ain't nobody sitting up for *me* to come home. I guess I'll look around for a little while and see what's doin'."

"For heaven's sake, go!" Millicent implored, at the edge of tears. "Go away, *please!*"

"Seems to me you're pretty anxious to be let alone," the burglar remarked. "Looks like they ought to be something in this for me."

Oliver now put in a word, saying, "Here's ten dollars, if you get out immediately by the way you came in. I'll promise not to call for help or notify the police if you leave just as quick as you can. Here; I'll let you out the front door!" The sight of Millicent's tears was working on him powerfully, but the burglar saw his advantage.

"I see," said the man; "afraid of a little talky-talk, eh? The lady doesn't care to testify in court and be wrote up in the papers. I understand. But that's worth more than ten dollars, boss; it's worth more to me, and it's worth more to her—ain't it, miss? Suppose you make it a twenty!"

"Twenty, then!" Millicent exclaimed; "twenty, if you go immediately."

"I don't know about twenty, after all," the burglar insisted, with exasperating coolness, shaking his revolver playfully. "I expected to make more'n a twenty out of this job. Say forty."

"I'll see you arrested first!" Oliver

exclaimed, out of all patience at the extortion. "You needn't think you can blackmail us as hot as you please. Twenty or nothing!"

Millicent now burst into sobs. "Oh, Oliver, pay him the forty dollars!" she pleaded. "I can't stand it!"

"But I haven't got forty dollars with me," said Oliver. "Besides, if I agree, he'll only jump up the price again!"

"Let's sit down and talk it over," said the burglar. "Or would you rather yell for the cops? If you do, I'll have to shoot, and the perlice will find me alone with the lady, which will be worse'n being found alone with you! An' she'll be a-weepin' over a bleedin' corpse, into the bargain! I say, let's sit down and talk it over friendly. It ain't often I get a chance to arbertrate like this, and I'm ready to do the square thing."

There was nothing for it, then, but to assent to this ridiculous and undignified arrangement, and Oliver and Millicent took chairs together, while the burglar seated himself comfortably on a wide couch. In his hand the revolver still twinkled wickedly.

Millicent's eyes ran from the clock to the burglar and from the burglar to the clock again. Every minute made the case harder. But the man grew more cheerful. "Got a smoke?" he asked of his host.

Oliver pointed to a box of cigars on the mantel, and the visitor helped himself, tossed one to the young man and reseated himself. "That is, if the young lady don't object," he added, with mock courtesy.

Millicent tossed her head in contempt. "Fine evening," the man remarked, cordially.

"Oh, can't you have pity on us?" cried Millicent, unable to stand the suspense. "Do say what you want, and go! I'll give you all I have, if you'll only go away!"

"We'll have to make terms with you, I suppose," Oliver added. "Name your price, and we'll see what we can do. But, as I said, I haven't forty dollars with me. Shall I give you a cheque?"

The burglar grinned. "I can't use cheques in my business, thanks," he said, drily. "They're too liable to be stopped by telephone. Go ahead, smoke up, young feller!" and he puffed luxuriously at his own cigar.

Oliver, exasperated and anxious as he was, swallowed his mortification and resolved to make the best of a bad situation and humor the man. He lighted the cigar, therefore, and said, "What do you want, then? Let's get down to business."

"Oh, hang business!" said the burglar. "I can't talk without a drink. What you got here, anyway?"

There was a decanter on the table, and from it he helped himself, after pouring two glasses for the others. To one of these he pointed affably with his pistol. "Have one with me," he said. "We'll drink to the young lady here; she's a peach! I'm proud to be in such company, and to have you make me at home in this way. Well, here goes!" and he tossed off his drink, with an unremitting glance over the top of his glass the while.

Oliver drank with an unhappy smile. "I can't refuse *that* toast," he said, apologetically.

The burglar, refreshed and mellowed, satisfied with his anomalous position as dictator, allowed his glance to rove about the room. The trophy of arms on the wall interested him greatly, though the pair of dueling pistols aroused his scorn. "They wouldn't be much use in a fix like this," he observed. "Bully old knives, though," he said, testing their edges on his thumb. "I s'pose, now, all this old junk is hot stuff, and worth all kinds of money, but it don't go with me. You're devilish shy of plate! They ain't much swag here."

By this time, edging round the room, watching the two narrowly, he had reached a small table on which lay a card case. "What's this?" he said, and he opened it and took out an engraved card.

Millicent's rage, suppressed with great effort, at the gross indignity of

her position, flamed at this minor insult. "That's mine, you coward! Do you have to rob women, too? Can't you be satisfied with your dirty trade without that?"

The burglar leered at Oliver. Then he read the name on the card. "Miss Raybridge, 2115 East avenue," he drawled. "So that's your name, is it, miss?"

Millicent bit her lip at her stupidity. The fat was in the fire now, and her blush gave the man his cue. "Miss Raybridge visitin' her gentlem'n friend at eleven P.M. Scandal in high life. Prominent young clubman in trouble. By the way," he said, "I missed your name when we was introduced. What did you say it was?"

Oliver, white with fury, kept his silence as well as he could. Millicent's foot was tapping the floor. The burglar walked toward the secretary. "They's more'n one way to kill a cat besides a-kissin' of it to death," he remarked. "Let's have a look at the desk."

He fumbled among the pigeonholes, keeping a sharp sidelong glance at Oliver. He drew out a bundle of letters and shuffled them over, looking at the addresses. "Mr. Oliver Herkomer, 21 Randall Mansions," he read aloud. "I guess that's the party, eh?" Not content with this, he calmly opened the sheet inside an envelope. "Rotten bad writin'," he remarked. "I wish these highrollers used typewriters more. Let's see what's up. P'raps the young lady would like to listen."

"Oh, I say," cried Oliver, who had caught sight of the handwriting, "let my letters alone, will you? Take everything else you want, but don't you read those letters!"

"Private business, eh? Don't care for to have 'em read out loud? Well, I'll just take a look through for luck. No, you better stay right where you are, young feller!" and he held his pistol ready. His eye dropped to the signature of the note. "'Kitty,'" he read—"who's Kitty? Perhaps Miss—what's-her-name—Raybridge,

knows." He looked over to her interrogatively.

"I don't know, and I don't care," she said, defiantly, but her looks belied her.

"Well, all right," said the burglar; "here's another. 'Mrs. Abram Hewlett requests the pleasure of Mr. Herkomer's presence on December 5th, to meet Mr. Godfrey Ballard, nine till 'leven.' That's to-day, ain't it? Wonder what Mrs. Abram Hewlett would think if she knew how long it took to get home."

"See here," cried Oliver, fiercely; "drop that, please! You had better quit. If you dare to insult this young lady with another comment, I'll kill you! Miss Raybridge is engaged to be married to me, and she has a perfect right to be here. If you think you can blackmail us you're mistaken. I've stood this long enough, and it's time we settled and you got out of this. Are you going to keep us here all night with this tomfoolery? Don't threaten me with that pistol; I'm not afraid of it. If it hadn't been for the young lady's being here, you'd have been a dead man half an hour ago!"

"Don't get worried," replied the burglar; "I guess it's time to have another drink." He went up to the table and poured out a glass. "So you two are supposed to be engaged, eh? Why didn't you say so before? Let me congratulate you. Miss Raybridge, have you got any objections?"

Millicent was visibly confused. The liberties the man had taken were past forbearance, and her pride rose. "It's none of your business!" she answered, in disgust.

The burglar smiled sarcastically. "Then your little bluff don't go," he remarked to Oliver. "This is so sudden, you know!" He looked audaciously at the two. "Pretty good match, though, for all I can see. Lady's a greyhound and the gent's well fixed." Then he turned to Millicent. "What's the trouble?" he asked; "somebody else in it?"

The lady hid her face in her hands and refused to answer. The burglar turned his attention to the young

man and gave him an elaborate wink. "Threw down, eh? Better try it on again. I'll see what I can do for you. Perhaps we can bring her round."

The scene, atrocious as it was, forced a smile from Mr. Herkomer. "How long do you intend to keep this up?" he asked.

"I'm going to stay with it until she says she'll have you," replied the burglar, with a quick decision. The remark seemed to please him, and he rubbed his hands. "Say," he continued, "how much you got in your wad?"

Oliver opened his purse and felt in his pockets, counting out his change. "Twenty-seven dollars," he said, finally. Millicent looked up with a ray of hope on her face.

"Perhaps you could make it thirty if you tried good and hard," the man suggested.

"Look in that left-hand drawer, below the pigeonholes," said Oliver.

The man opened the drawer and took out a few bills. "Five dollars," he announced. "That'll do. Now we'll talk biz. I had expected to pull more out of this job, but then I didn't look to have so much fun. I've rather took a fancy to the pair of you, and you've been square. See here, now. Just as soon as the young lady says she'll have you, on the square, and no funny business—for keeps, honor of a lady—then I'll get out, and not before. What d'you say to that? I say it's handsome, and I'm doin' you both a favor."

Millicent had looked up and then down again. She awaited Oliver's answer eagerly. It did not take him long to decide. "Of course not!" he answered. "Do you think I'd consent to forcing a lady's hand that way?"

The burglar laughed. "All right, then," he said, and poured himself another drink. Millicent looked at the clock. Then she drew her chair nearer to Oliver's.

"Oliver," she whispered, so that the burglar could not hear.

"Well!" said the young man.

"It's very late; I don't know what they'll be thinking at home!"

"I don't see how I can help it," said Oliver. "I can't rush him, for he's watching me all the time. If you weren't here I'd risk it, but if anything happens to you on my account you'll be in a worse fix than you're in now. There's nothing to do that I can see."

"Unless—" suggested the lady.

"Yes, unless—" he answered.

There was silence for a minute or so. The burglar had taken another cigar, and was regarding them benevolently from the further side of the room, watching his leaven work.

Millicent drew her chair still closer.

"What did you mean by saying you were in earnest when you wanted to kiss me?" she whispered, softly.

"I meant that I wanted to marry you, of course," he replied, restraining a desire to look at her.

"Did you really?" she said. "Then why didn't you ask me?"

A tremor in her voice aroused Oliver's hopes. "I didn't dare," he asserted. "That was why I asked you to come up here, but when you wouldn't kiss me I thought it was no use, and you meant to refuse me, and I couldn't stand it! Millie, would you have said 'Yes?'"

"A little louder, please," interrupted the burglar. "Speak up; I'm in charge of this party. What's she saying?"

The look Oliver cast him now was for the first time that evening indulgent. It was even friendly.

"What did she say?" the burglar insisted.

"I really didn't hear it myself," Oliver protested.

The burglar, under the genial influence of a third glass, turned to Miss Raybridge. "Well, miss, what *did* you say?" he demanded.

"I said 'Yes!'" she announced, calmly.

"Good-night, then," the man said, affably, as he helped himself generously to the Cabanas. "I'll expect to

get cards for the wedding, sure. I'd like to give the bride away, but you can trust me. So long!"

Hardly had he closed the door when Millicent, who did not seem to be in so much of a hurry as before, turned to Oliver.

"Who is Kitty?" she demanded.



A COLLEGE GIRL

A FAIR and winsome lass was she,
In figure neat and trim;
Her only fault appeared to be
Too great a love for "Jim."

She would not go to drive or sail,
To please her best friend's whim,
If such an outing would curtail
The hours she pledged to "Jim."

She talked of gowns which, at their best,
Would shock the very prim;
And even those, so she confessed,
Were made and worn for "Jim."

I learned to know her well enough,
At last, to scoff at "Jim,"
Which always brought a sharp rebuff,
Delivered with a vim.

And yet she listened to my plea,
Which she did not condemn,
For though she still loved "Jim," you see
She spelled it "G—y—m."

FRANK ROE BATCHELDER.



A PARADOXICAL TALESMAN

JUDGE—Have you formed any opinion on this case?
WOULDBEIGH JUROR—No, sir; I haven't mentioned it to my wife.



WINNING HIS WAY

SHE—Why are you so anxious to marry my daughter?
HE—To settle a bet. A friend bet me that you wouldn't make a good mother-in-law.

THE CONQUERING WILL

By Harriet Prescott Spofford

THERE was no doubt that he was a masterful man. He ruled everyone on shore as he had ruled everyone at sea. His wife had never meant to marry him; but she did. When the fleet went into Asiatic waters she had declared she would not follow; but she did. When the child died she had wished to clothe herself in black; but she didn't. Wherever he was Captain Gilbert's will was the only will. Whenever she resisted him she felt like a wave shattering itself to foam against a rock in the mid-seas.

Sometimes she wondered if there were any hypnotic quality about him. Her mother had said she was possessed. But she really knew better. So far as she was concerned, she knew that the reason the Captain had his own way was simply because she loved him. And so far as everyone else was concerned, she was glad he did have his own way.

She had at first admired Captain Gilbert more than she loved him—admired his superb and stalwart figure of the large, heroic type; his Greek head, ringed over with short, yellow curls; his bold features, his eyes, that had in them the blue of the skies but also the glance of the eagle; his commanding air. And moreover, his manner, when he chose, had an inexpressible charm that carried all before it. No one dared contend with him—and then no one wished to do so. No wonder he was a masterful man. He was never resisted; and the habit had become nature.

Indeed, his wife hardly knew, after a while, when she had a wish other than her husband's. It is true she thought blue more becoming, but he

liked to see her in pink, and she always went about like a lovely blush rose. It was also true that there had been a time when she cared for dancing; but Captain Gilbert would not endure the familiarity of the waltz, and so she never waltzed—when Captain Gilbert was looking. It is true she enjoyed the theatre; but Captain Gilbert prepared to go to church, and she went to church, and felt afterward very righteous and content.

But on the other hand, she loved riding; and the Captain kept her provided with a mount that was the envy of all the other women in the field. He himself rode like a centaur, and she never admired him more than in the saddle. She was fond of sea bathing, and he took for her every Summer a little place by the seaside, and none of the merpeople ever disported themselves with more sense of possession of the deep sea caves than they did. She would have enjoyed land travel; but Captain Gilbert preferred seafaring, so that she never saw any other world than the world of waters. She recovered from her seasickness after a few days, and then took keenest pleasure in the bounding and soaring from billow to billow, as if she were a seagull sitting on the wave or flying over it. Alone, too, in the vast region of sunlit sky and sea, or when night carried space into dark infinity, or when they rode triumphant over storm, and every man on the yacht was a machine moved by the Captain's will, he seemed to her each time a more positive potency than before.

But if the Captain had his own way

in the outside things of life his way was usually right. It was because he said that it simply should be done that the salary of Dr. Saintly was raised to living limit. It was he who, when the rest of the town where he lived when off duty frowned down an embezzling bank officer who had served his term in prison, insisted that the man should be helped to work and to respect again. It was he who brought home a forsaken woman of the place, and required civility for her so long as she did right. "If there is one thing certain," said the Captain, "it is that love is the best thing in the world. And I mean, Fanny, that you and I shall be as much at one with this great spirit filling the universe as holding the helpful hand to all can make us."

Perhaps, however, the Captain would not have carried things so before him if all his little world had not known of certain splendid achievements in the sea fights, giving him, in a measure, the right to his own way, giving him also the wounds that enforced his retirement and shortened his life. Wherever they were, people turned to look at him and to approve, and it gratified Mrs. Gilbert as much as when they turned to look at her—she was the woman whom this wonder among men had chosen out of all the women on the earth. But they always found it well worth their while to look at her. "The Lord may have thought He made the most beautiful thing possible when He made this rose," the Captain said to her once, stooping to a wayside bramble, "but I think He made the most beautiful thing when He made a woman. And you are a woman and a rose, too!"

"You make me blush," said Mrs. Gilbert; "and here, on the street!" They were going home from church across the fields. "Yes, I should wonder why I was given such a wife if it were not that she has such a husband," he added, laughing. And when Captain Gilbert laughed Mrs. Gilbert felt that the world went well, and she laughed, too. And she never

looked prettier than when her red lips curved apart over the rice-pearl teeth, and disclosed ravishing little dimples in either velvet cheek.

But possibly Captain Gilbert could not have so completely dominated his wife if she had not felt in him a fine superiority to the small things of life and had not had a fearsome joy in sometimes following his thought out into what he called the Fourth Dimension. "This earth and its envelopings are beautiful," he said, "but when I remember that there are colors we cannot see, sounds too fine for our ears, I know we are only spelling the alphabet of all we shall find—out there. Nights when I have walked the deck, virtually alone, and have seen the stars sentineling the great courts of space beyond space, I have felt sure they were made for no idleness—that there were reasons for their being; and in some form or other we shall tread their mazes and come out upon the reason for all things." She did not entirely understand him; but it may be that she admired him all the more on that account.

But there was one thing in which Captain Gilbert failed to have his own way. One thing?—two things! He could not hinder men from staring at Mrs. Gilbert, and he could not hinder Mrs. Gilbert from showing—in the mildest mannered way—that she was conscious of the gaze and possibly not unpleased. "I am sure I can't help their looking at me," she pouted, turning away from the window.

"You can help making eyes at them!" he replied.

"Captain Gilbert! What language!"

"Suiting the word to the action."

"And as if I could help my eyes!" the tears making them like live jewels.

"I know they're beautiful eyes!" said the Captain, remorsefully. "But they're my eyes! They don't belong to every fool going by."

"I never knew such a tyrant! You're like the man in the 'Morte d'Arthur' who wanted his wife hideous before the court, but beautiful when alone with him."

"Precisely," said Captain Gilbert, laughing. "And I wish we had those days back—days when a man owned his wife, like any other precious thing, till a stronger took her—"

"It's always a stronger that takes her, one way or another."

"He'll be stronger than the laws of the universe if he takes you, that's all," said the Captain, lifting her in his arms and walking down the room with her as if she had been a child; "for by all the laws of the universe you are mine! And mine you will be forever, alive or dead!" And, to her troubled amazement, he was sobbing. "Fanny," he cried, "if you married another man after I died—after I died—if I were in the farthest star of the farthest heavens I should come back and punish him!"

"Oh!" cried Mrs. Gilbert. Then, through her own tears: "Why not leave that to me?"

Mrs. Gilbert was one of the women with whom this brigand-like way of making love is effective. And when, shortly afterward, Captain Gilbert betook himself to the farthest star and left her widowed, she missed the excitations and the raptures and the sense of being adored, even if tyrannized over; and she was not at all consoled by the fact that she looked charming in black, which there was no one now to forbid her.

But a little time works wonders. Mrs. Gilbert one day woke to the fact that she was free, with no one to say her nay; free as a bird in the air. At least, she would have been free if she had had any money to be free with. But Captain Gilbert's half-pay had stopped with his breath, and there was a delay about pension business and about other money, during which Mrs. Gilbert found herself so hard pressed as to be almost in despair about ways and means. And when Mr. Mercer proposed that she share a million with him, she was in more minds than one about accepting the idea, and she actually asked for time. Captain Gilbert, she reasoned, would never want her to be

put about this way for money—her mourning was positively shabby. And she thought of it very seriously—it might do—Mr. Mercer was a gentleman. But when he called for his reply she came down, white to her lips, so white that she was ghastly, and said it was impossible.

It was the same way with Dr. Vaughn. It seemed so eminently respectable, so altogether what the gossips would have called too good a chance to lose, she would be so well cared for—and she was just on the point of yielding. But after a night's reflection she wrote that it was out of the question, her hand shaking so that her script looked like a field of wheat bowed in the wind.

And after that she went for a while so sedately, so demurely, so entirely as the fond and faithful widow should, that who but the rector should be acknowledging her fascination? And she knew in her heart that she would be a capital wife for a clergyman, that she might have the parish under her little thumb—she, a helpmeet better than the best! She said to herself it was a pity if she could not do as she pleased; she smiled on him; she came near giving him her hand to kiss in token of the ring it might wear presently. And then she sent him in his turn the hurried note that laid all hope low.

Captain Gilbert had been lost to the breathing world almost half a dozen years, and his wife was as much like a lovely blooming rose as ever, when John Mowbray crossed her path. And he not only crossed it, but he obstructed it. The years had passed quietly; her affairs had adjusted themselves; although she could have spent more, she was no longer in need of money. She had almost forgotten Mr. Mercer and his successors in misfortune. And John Mowbray was a man of an unfamiliar and engaging type. He loved music, the opera, Wagner; she had never had enough of music in her life. He was more or less of a student, acquainted with books, a haunter of libraries; it seemed to her that he held the gates open to

a fair and inviting plaisance. Well born and well bred, he had the air, without having traveled much, of knowing men and manners and the world; but to travel was his intention—and she saw the gates open to a life of infinitely wider interest than this small daily round. He was on the sunny side, as she was; with a most agreeable personality, with a delightful courtesy, and as she began to suspect, with a sincere affection for herself.

He had come to see her, that snowy night, through all the storm, bringing her an armful of great red roses. There was something very pleasant about his coming in; it gave her a feeling of protection, emphasized the idea of shelter. She heaped the fire and presently the ruddy flames danced over the room and the flowers, and over the pretty woman disposing them in their bowls and jars, till it all seemed to John Mowbray, still warming his hands at the blaze, the ideal of a home. What a place to come to every night! What a place never to go away from! What a dream!

She knew what was coming very well. Some subtle instinct made her try to fortify herself against it. She sat down behind a table and leaned forward, rearranging with twinkling fingers the roses in the vase that nearly hid her face. And then in another moment he was half-kneeling beside her, and he was murmuring, "Fanny, Fanny! let it be real—this dream. I am dreaming! Tell me not to wake! Say, dear, say that you love me!" And before she knew it the strong arms were about her, and she was hiding her face on his shoulder.

What an evening of deep, serene happiness it was! Side by side they looked into the future, and its glow shed a light over them. "It is too much, too much happiness," she said, as they parted. "Something will hinder. I—I shall not be allowed—" And she grew very pale.

"Thank heaven, there is no one to allow or to disallow," said John Mowbray. "You are not now the young

girl to be dominated, but the woman whose beautiful nature has developed the power to choose, and I am crowned and blessed by your choice!"

"I am afraid—I am afraid—" she said, as he bade her good-night.

"Of what, my love?" he asked her.

"Oh, of nothing, of nothing, so long as you are here!" she said, clinging to him more closely.

And "I am afraid!" she repeated again, as she went up stairs, though trembling with joy.

She had half a mind to sit up that night and not go to sleep at all. She dropped the curtain quickly as she saw the stars sparkling in the sky from which the snow clouds were already blowing away. The thought of that farthest star would come back and make her shiver. But she was tired out with emotion—with hope and joy and fear—and she fell asleep in the big armchair just as Captain Gilbert came into the room, strong, stalwart, mighty, and looking like the hero of some Viking legend.

The wind had blown a fine color into his face; his curls were sprayed with the melted snow, his eyes were as dazzlingly blue as a noonday sky. "I have come a long way to see you, my wife," he said, and the old familiar tone rang sweetly through all the chambers of her heart. "And I never saw you lovelier. How dear, how beautiful you are! How long we have belonged to each other! Do you remember the night by the gate under the honeysuckles, when you reached out your hand in the dark, uncertain if I was there, and suddenly I clasped it? Dear hand! I have never, never let it go! I never will! I saw a sapphire as blue as Lyra on my way here. I will have it for this little hand—only the hand is so slight, the sapphire is so heavy. How quiet it is here—it is always quiet about you, my wife—you are so serene, and your husband is so stormy! Here is the smell of roses that always hovers about you—oh, how sweet, how sweet you are! Up, and let me sit down and hold you in my arms, you featherweight! There,

rest the dear head. What makes you shiver so? It is warm. I am here—your husband. Warm? I am warm to my marrow, being with you, holding you, living again the delicious life we used to live. Oh, what life will be again with you, most perfect of women, most faithful of wives! I have been so cold, so far off, so longing for you! What ways I have traversed, what have I encountered, just for this hour! And it is worth it all. There are great things in store for us, little woman. Lean your cheek on mine—how velvet soft, how warm—you are mine, mine, mine——”

She heard, she remembered no more, but woke with the sun pouring into the window and streaming over her through the crimson warmth of the geraniums, and all her heart expanded with the old affection.

Suffused still with the mood of the night, she made her toilette and went down, thoughtless, reckless, almost gay—and met John Mowbray coming through the door, his sleigh-bells still jangling at the gate—he had come to take her sleighing. But at the first sight of his eager, expectant face she stopped. All her bloom fell away, she shook like a leaf; and he sprang forward, thinking she was about to fall. “No, no, no!” she cried. “Forget last night! Forget everything! It is impossible! It is out of the question. I am Captain Gilbert’s wife still. Captain Gilbert—will not—will not allow it.”

And then she dropped fainting into his arms.

She did not, however, lose consciousness entirely. She knew very well that John Mowbray was covering her face with kisses while carrying her to the sofa. The blood surged over her forehead in a conviction of guilt, and then she turned her face to the wall.

“What does this mean?” cried John Mowbray.

“He—he has been here,” she faltered.

“Who has been here?” he demanded.

“Captain Gilbert.”

“What—what is it you say?” he exclaimed, springing to his feet.

“He was here last night—I am not out of my head. Oh, no, I am not beside myself! He has been here before—the same way—whenever—Oh, see how unworthy I am!”

And she covered her face with her hands.

He seated himself on the edge of the sofa and took down the two hands, holding them in his own.

“You mean you dreamed last night,” he said.

“Oh, no, no! Dreamed? Oh, it was too real! Dreamed? I don’t know—Do you suppose it could be just a dream? Always the same dream, only with differences? And he so all he used to be when he was best and tenderest, making me feel that he was my husband forever and ever, that I—Oh, you see I love him still!”

“I should be ashamed of you if you didn’t!” said John Mowbray, sternly. “But you love me, too! You know you do!”

“How can I love two men at once?” cried Fanny.

“You don’t. One of us is an angel in heaven. I shall never have the least jealousy of your affection for him. You and I are on the earth. And when we are as the angels in heaven we shall never marry or be given in marriage. Come, you need the air. Where is your thick cloak, your furs, a hood? Here is the sleigh at the gate. We will drive up the river. On the way we will stop at the rectory——”

“But—but——”

“Not a but about it. I shall have the right then to shield my wife in her dreams and from her dreams. And I don’t believe anyone will come where I am to challenge him!” And Fanny Gilbert had found again the power that surrounded her like a fortress and the will that was perhaps as strong as Captain Gilbert’s will.

It seemed that John Mowbray must have been right. After the sleigh ride and the brief ceremony at the rector’s he took his wife away and into

a round of gaieties that gave her no time to reflect. And then came the voyage overseas and the travel that should so fill thought and memory as to leave no room for the past. Under all the novelty and pleasure and excitement, and Mr. Mowbray's constant presence and care, she became a new creature. Blooming with fresh being, enlarged to the larger life, her prettiness became beauty, her liveliness sparkling, and her sweetness, to John Mowbray, enchanting. His pride in her was equal to his passion. It was with pleasure that he saw men's eyes follow her, and women's, too. When she rode, her trim grace and dauntless spirit hung afterward before his own eyes, as if he had seen Dian and her train pass by. At the opera, as she stood a moment, easy, gracious, dropping off her cloak and revealing a dazzle of jewels and gleaming tissues, of eyes like jewels, too, of roses, cream and blush, and of smiles, and when he saw her breathless, rapt in the music and the play, he felt a joy of possession that was like a pain; but with the emotion came a vague fear of its evanescence.

The premonition was not felt at once, however. There was a season of unassailed rapture before he noticed that Mrs. Mowbray had become very restless, seeking perpetually some new object, and so absent-minded that he sometimes spoke twice or thrice before she heard him. Glowing with color and life and happiness in the evening, in the morning she would be as pale and sad and languid as if she had danced all night with witches, so that he wondered if she slept at all. She ate almost nothing, started at every sound, laughed nervously at nothing, and her eyes filled with tears likewise at nothing. She began to grow very thin. Suddenly he perceived that she was wasting away before his eyes.

Like Asa of old, Mr. Mowbray had recourse to the physicians, and that without loss of time. But as she persisted that nothing ailed her, and had no symptoms to present other

than those they saw, they could do little beyond administering tonics, which were as idle as spring water.

"My dear one," he said to her at last, "tell me—what is it? There is something you hide from me. My precious one, my wife, tell me; are you unhappy?"

"Oh, yes, yes, yes!" she cried, lifting her hands passionately. "I am wretched! I am wretched!"

He turned as white as she. "Fanny!" he cried.

"Oh, not the way you think!" she cried. "But, oh! I cannot tell you!"

He sat down beside her and took her in his arms. "Whatever it is, you must tell me," he said, gently. "You are my one thought in life. I can do nothing to serve you if I am in the dark."

"It is I!—It is I who am in the dark!" she wept.

"Tell me what you mean, my darling," he urged her.

"I—I don't know if I am your darling!" she exclaimed. "I don't know who I am!"

"Fanny, dearest, I don't understand. Be reasonable, my little wife, let me know."

"Am I your wife? or am I his?"

"Dearest!"

"I don't know. He comes—he has come every night——"

He clasped her convulsively in his arms. "I live a double life," she said, moving herself feebly yet resistingly. "All day I am yours. All night I am his!"

"Dear child! dear little one! You are ill. You are letting a dream——"

"It is not like any dream——"

"But, dream or not, it is when all your powers are submerged in sleep, when you are not fully yourself——"

"Oh, but in the daylight——"

"Yes, in the daylight, when you are you, then—then you are only mine!"

"I am afraid—I am afraid," she sighed. "Every night when I go to sleep—I don't know what may happen. Some night, some night, he will take me!" And her voice died to a whisper.

"Never!" he cried. "Never, while I am beside you."

At that moment, as she lay in his arms, they both were possessed by a great shuddering and fear. It was dark all about them, as if it were already night. A wind seemed to fill the room and then to hold its breath, a wind that might have been blowing from nowhere to nowhere, but hanging now still and chill.

"Hold me, hold me fast, John!" she murmured. "He has come for me!" Her arms fell, her head drooped nerveless over his arm. "Oh, John, I love——"

The lips, wide open, said no more. And in the instant of that last sigh John Mowbray knew, by some other than the sense of sight, that Captain Gilbert, masterful, laughing, debonair, towered like a shaft of sunlight before him.

"You are wronged of nothing," a voice that had no sound was ringing in his ears. "The bindweed falls

that leans upon a straw. You would have made her happy if you might. But you could not conquer the unconquerable will. And I have come for my own!"

"As a destroying force—destroying joy, destroying life!" cried John Mowbray. "And I defy you! For though you carry her beyond your farthest star, she loves me best, and I will follow you!"

"Spirit to spirit, flesh to flesh, John Mowbray. She is mine!"

There was a flutter of the purple-veined eyelids in the face that had fallen from his arm, a tremor of the lips, a long, slow, bubbling sigh. Slipping, slipping from his grasp, a lifeless heap lay on the floor—and by all the avenues through which the viewless thing may reach the soul, John Mowbray saw Captain Gilbert fading into an intenser light, his wife held close beside him. And then, though it was broad noonday, the world was black and still.



NIGHT IN THE DESERT

WITH star-dust scintillant the vault is sown;
But the vague vastitude of lower air
Is as a purple shroud about the bare
And billowy sand-waste ominously lone.
Heavy with sleep, no more the camels moan;
Slumber has sealed the pious pilgrim's prayer;
And save the lion, loping from his lair,
There is no wanderer in this desert zone.

The silence quivers if one starts from dreams,
But not with sound. The rigor of suspense
Were broken could a bird or brook but sing.
But ah! the stillness that so breathless seems!
The awful solitude, the imminence
As of some unimaginable thing!

CLINTON SCOLLARD.



CHERUBIC CONSIDERATION

MR. BEAUMAN—Tommy, does your sister know I am here?
TOMMY—Yes, sir; but rest easy, for I didn't tell pop.

THE LAW'S LOOPHOLE

THE LADY TO THE LAWYER

"**L**EARNED sir, I've come to you
 With a broken heart—boo-hoo!
 Won't you please to see me through
 The divorce court's pathway stony?
 He has always been to me
 Just as good as good can be;
 But I'm *tired*! Now, don't you see?
 Try to get big alimony!"

THE LAWYER TO THE LADY

"Tired? Shameful! Did he dare
 Treat you thus? A fiend, I swear!
 Ah, the things that women bear
 With such sweet humility!
 Case is clear as clear can be—
 Fifty dollars is the fee!
 Thanks! Yes, on these grounds, you see:
Incompatibility!"

ROY FARRELL GREENE.



SURE TO BE WELCOMED

DOCTOR—I don't expect to meet all my patients in the next world.
FRRIEND—No; but those you do meet will be sure to give you a warm
 reception.



NEITHER SLIGHTED

IN Spring life's sweetest song is sung;
 In notes of joy the tale is told
 Of newest fads found for the young
 And newest wrinkles for the old.



THE ONLY EXPLANATION

MISS BONDS—A young man committed suicide because I refused him.
HE—You don't say! He surely overestimated your income.

REINCARNATION

By Edith Sessions Tupper

I LIVED in Egypt once, I know,
For oft at night in heavy sleep,
From mountains crested high with snow,
O'er rivers winding dark and deep,
O'er seas and plains and vales I go,

And come at last where sunrise gleams
With shafts of scarlet, pink and gold,
On palm trees guarding sluggish streams,
On tombs and temples centuries old—
I see them all in fitful dreams.

And there's one palace vast and grand;
A terrace stretching far and wide;
An avenue across the sand,
With statues grim on either side,
And colonnades on every hand.

That was my home. A princess I,
With dusky hair and velvet lips,
Whose beauty rare to glorify,
My poets vowed none could eclipse,
My lovers swore none could deny.

And many loved me. But to you,
A stalwart, handsome, fair-haired slave,
With curling lips and eyes of blue,
And tender touch—to you I gave
My heart. My soul you knew—you knew.

We heard at dawn the fountains play
Along the splendid marble floors;
And sweet as scent of lotus spray,
Stole music through the latticed doors—
Now loud, now soft, now far away.

I see again the evil face
That glowers between the curtains red;
The knife—that e'en in my embrace
Struck swift and sure, and left you dead,
The blood-jets spouting o'er my lace.

THE SMART SET

'Tis always sunrise when I go
 In visions vague, in fleeting dreams,
 From lands of pine and sparkling snow,
 To palm trees guarding lazy streams
 In Egypt, where I lived, I know.

Red grows the world. Through drowsy lids
 I see the Nile as sunrise flares
 Its banners—then, as memory bids,
 The stone face of the desert stares,
 And lo, the Sphinx! the Pyramids!



SARTORIAL SHEARS

PARKER—Did you buy that suit for all wool?
 TUCKER—I did.
 PARKER—Well, you got fleeced, old fellow.



SUPERFLUOUS EFFORT

ETHEL—There is a report out that you are engaged to Arthur.
 EDITH—Well, do you want me to deny it?
 “Oh, it doesn't matter. I would not believe the report even if you should deny it.”



THE DEAR CREATURE

O ANGEL of peace and promoter of strife!
 O woman whose love is a bubble!
 Thou makest us all of the trouble of life—
 And life, we may add, worth the trouble.

MALCOLM LEAL.



PRESERVING THE ELEGANCIES

MRS. STAIRS (*to her husband, when stout lady enters*)—Oh, poor thing!
 See how she pants and puffs!
 MR. STAIRS—Don't say that, my dear. Say, see how she trousers and powders!

IN MY WIFE'S EYE

By John Regnault Ellyson

THE last time His Grace the Archbishop dined with us there occurred a somewhat unexpected and slightly sensational episode. At the close of the meal the maidservant came in and said that a poor gentleman at the door asked for something to eat. Questioned good-humoredly by me as to why she spoke of him as a gentleman, she answered piquantly that he certainly looked like one. My wife, glad of an opportunity of showing His Grace how she usually treated the poor and of showing me how impertinent she considered my inquiry, ordered the servant to bring him in at once.

"I think," said I, after a little pause, "I think it is not well to have him served here."

"Oh, yes," my wife replied, softly, but decisively; "we will have him here, by all means."

The stranger, entering as I made my remark, lingered near the door. Reassured by my wife's words and a glance from her, he advanced a few steps further into the room.

He was a thin, tall person, indifferently dressed, but with a good presence and a curiously priestly air—an apparently diffident, mild-mannered man, with a long, melancholy face and a downward cast of the eye.

He had nothing to say, but he seemed touched by the attention accorded him. My wife motioned him to the empty chair. He folded the cap he held, slipped it into his pocket and then sat down at the table, crossing himself and bowing his head for a moment.

This action especially, and the well-bred manner in which he ate, very

favorably impressed His Grace and my wife and rather puzzled me. All of us remained seated and conversation was continued, an occasional question being put to the stranger and eliciting a distinct but low-voiced reply. When he had finished the meal he again made the sign of the cross and bowed his head for somewhat less than a moment. He looked up then, and turning to my wife, said:

"Madam, in spite of your father's remarks—" he pointed toward me, but my wife was so pleased that she did not correct him, and His Grace was so seriously amused that he could not—"in spite of your father's remarks, you have been extremely kind, and I don't know how to thank you sufficiently. Perhaps, if you'll pardon me, I may take courage and relate an interesting event of my life, and thus in part repay you for your courtesies."

"Indeed, we shall only too gladly listen," said my wife.

"Well, then," resumed the stranger, speaking slowly and clearly, but in sad, soft tones now and again quivering with stifled emotion, "doubtless you've observed, though too gracious to comment on the fact, that at certain intervals I hold my breath for a moment and make the sign of the holy cross. If you will allow me to interrupt myself in such a way every five minutes, I will promise to tell some things that are truly amazing. It would pain me very much if you didn't understand me fully; I must say, therefore, that this interruption is a form of penance I imposed on myself two long years ago, immediately after my deliver-

ance, and while I hold my breath and make the sign of the cross, I'm offering up my soul in prayer.

"It would deeply pain me, too, if you should conceive the wrong impression of me. Possibly, from my tone and air, you have taken me for an unfrocked but repentant priest—Ah, so you confess as much! Believe me, however, I'm nothing of the kind. No; until the fateful change came in my career—until the beginning of the last two years—I was a merchant in Chester, England. If ever you should go there and question the people concerning me they would reply by stating that I came of a very devout family, that I have always deported myself like an honest man, and that I am now traveling about in the world on an unknown mission. Many other things they would no doubt tell you, but on these three points they would all agree. You seem astonished already. But, my distinguished friends, do reserve your astonishment; you will, in all candor, have need of it before I'm done.

"At the time I speak of there lived in the house adjoining mine a certain Dr. Zwatch. He had lived there for ten years and had secured a large practice. We were intimate friends; indeed, rather too intimate. The doctor, coming from Russia, had brought a long, peculiar history with him and a long, curious name. The name on his sign was a contraction of the original one. He frequently repeated the alien form, but nobody could ever repeat, much less remember it. Decidedly it was a wise change he made in that particular.

"This man, a profound scholar, was a most fascinating companion. He had magnetism of manner, perfect command of English, and ideas on all subjects. I have heard that he spoke twelve languages. The East he knew like a book, and he could picture any hero of its past or any incident of its history like an artist. He knew everything and took interest in everything. He reveled in science. Perpetually experimenting, every now and then by the mere skin of his teeth

he just escaped being blown into ribbons. You can't imagine how thrillingly he narrated these experiments and perils. They excelled romance. They charmed me. They gave rise to an admiration for him that was absolutely unbounded. His audacity grew to be a source of rare delight, his versatility amazed me, and so I fell completely under his influence—I became hopelessly infatuated.

"One day he opened up an astonishing proposition. . . . But excuse me for a moment."

The stranger lowered his head, made the sign of the cross, remained silent for about thirty seconds, and then resumed:

"Yes, the doctor suggested that I should take part in such an experiment as no one could have conceived of but this uncommonly remarkable man.

"'You almost make me leap out of my skin, doctor,' said I, attempting to smile, 'but it's absurd, of course—impracticable.'

"'On the contrary,' said he, 'I assure you it is very easily accomplished.' The trouble is that I mentioned it, perhaps, in too off-handed a manner."

"And at once he went on in his finest vein, describing the process minutely and with skill. No detail was omitted and no flaw was perceptible. In truth, nothing at first so incredible was ever rendered more plausible. In half an hour's time I entertained no doubts at all; I was as confident of success as the doctor himself. His persuasive tongue, his superhuman ingeniousness counted for much, but it was the altogether bewildering novelty of his project that effectually captivated my fancy.

"You note that I proceed with more discretion in this matter than the doctor did. He fired his proposition at my head like an electric bolt. I have gradually prepared your mind for the reception of the new idea. Briefly, then, he proposed to drop me into my wife's eye as a bee drops into the bell of a flower!

"Now I don't remember having heard it mentioned by anybody, but

you will scarcely deny that a man for years may live, as I had lived, in closest companionship with a beautiful wife and yet never for an instant get at any conception or emotion of hers she doesn't choose to reveal. If you know the nature of man you know that this puzzles, if it does not torture him, because he is so unlike the woman in this respect—he being non-secretive, naturally outspoken, naturally frank, even in his villainies. Perhaps St. Jerome was thinking of the same thing when he wrote that 'for one idea that women lay bare there are a thousand and one undisclosed, treasured in secret and veiled forever.'"

While the stranger, silent for a moment, leaned forward and wet his lips at the rim of his glass, the Archbishop looked very perplexed, and my wife, who had suddenly assumed a great rigidity of pose, darted an ominous glance at the unknown, on whom I, in my turn, bestowed the warmest of mute benedictions.

"I do not recall the words as being those of St. Jerome," said the Archbishop, gravely.

"They are his, nevertheless," said the stranger, in his earnest, quiet way; "but it matters not. The fact is, I was only about to say that the state of affairs to which I have alluded will not exist after the publication of my researches.

"The eye mirrors the mind—the eye reveals both conceptions and emotions; yet, viewed as you view the eye, nothing but the broadest conceptions and passions are visible. Every thought conceived by the brain, every fluctuation of emotional nature, is painted there, but the tints and shadows are so curious in character and so slight that they must be viewed, not from the outside but from the inside, and under exceptional conditions—"

The stranger stopped suddenly, swept his fingers over his brow in a peculiar way, and looked around as if he had lost his bearings. I had come to the conclusion already that the "poor gentleman" was mildly insane,

but his story was so delicious that I should have been heartily grieved if he had collapsed in the midst of it. I was delighted, therefore, when he resumed, though he had evidently forgotten where he had left off.

"Some moments ago I corrected an impression about myself," said he, "and now I ask you not to take up a wrong notion of my wife. She was certainly a study. She was beautiful, engaging, full of fine sentiments that fell from her lips on all occasions. She knew society as Dr. Zwath knew the world. She was always smiling, always obliging, serene and charming. The impression she produced on me she produced on others. I was flattered by the flatteries she received. She was superb—with graceful outlines, the complexion of the pale rose, adorable dark hair, a dimpled chin, most delicate brows. But what would have eclipsed any features but hers were her eyes—no woman ever had eyes that were darker, more eloquent, more brilliant or more alluring. Excuse me."

The stranger paused now again, bent down his head, crossed himself, and after remaining absorbed for half a moment continued his remarks in the same exceedingly quiet tones:

"And you see before you the man who got into one of those beautiful eyes, and who will try now to explain how he went in and how he came out.

"One morning I beguiled my wife into paying a visit to the doctor in his laboratory, where, as I told her, he promised to amuse us with some evidences of his skill. But my wife no sooner entered than the ingenious doctor presented her with a choice bouquet that exhaled an exquisite fragrance. She freely imbibed the odor and immediately swooned. We caught her before she fell and laid her carefully, and at ease, on a sort of low divan. She looked very pale, but very beautiful, and on her lips lingered the smile of a divinity.

"I stood charmed at her side for a long while. In those moments I

adored my wife more than ever—I recalled my first glimpses of her, the scenes of our earliest meetings, our confessions of love, our nuptials and the many charms of our subsequent life. I was deep in this dream when the voice of the doctor roused me.

"Quick, now!" said he, imperiously, seizing my arm and leading me to one end of the apartment, in which there was a circular pavilion of long dark-gray curtains.

"Shake off these clothes!" said he, and in some measure he aided me in disrobing. With the removal of each article I grew colder; I had not before noticed the temperature. Had it suddenly fallen several degrees, or had—?

"I thought I should surely freeze. As I got out of my last garment I shivered terribly. I seized a buffalo robe lying on the floor. I was in the act of wrapping myself when the doctor lifted one of the curtains of the circular pavilion and showed me an enormous copper caldron filled with a greenish fluid that smoked and boiled over the red coals of a vast iron brazier.

"I had no further need of the buffalo robe, though the temperature had not, I believe, materially changed. That sight was enough. I was suffused with suffocating warmth; perspiration burst from every pore; I panted for outside air. Turning toward the doctor, I fell on my knees in front of him and dumbly held up my hands.

"The doctor, for an instant touched with the pathos of the situation, leaned over me and helped me upon my feet, but then he said, petulantly:

"Come, this is not a matter of posing; we must conduct things scientifically, not dramatically! This way—I will assist you—one, two, and now again. Ah, considering, you are remarkably firm—one step more. Don't brood—it's better to observe. See how the green surface is broken by many-colored bubbles, and how the foam irradiates and curls round the edges. There!" cried he, and at the same time I felt a pressure from behind.

"It was the touch of the doctor's hand, treacherous and vigorous. For a moment I stood, or rather tottered, on the verge of this pool of unknown liquor, and then I sank forward with a thousand terrible noises ringing in my ears.

"I can't say just what first occurred. But I soon had extremely curious sensations. I breathed freely and pleasantly; a pungent odor rose in my nostrils; the liquor caressed my limbs like a magical balm. I was agreeably bewildered with a confusion of seductive thoughts—wave after wave of poetical imagery—a sort of rhythmic rising and falling of everything. Drowsiness slowly followed, and a failing away—I do not know exactly how to describe it. I lost the sense of limit or bounds—the sense of palpable reality. I seemed to dream and slip back into another dream, and back again still further into the new fold of a new dream, and so on infinitely; then, after a long, long period the process seemed reversed, and I gradually woke, but only to find myself still dreaming and waking again, and yet still dreaming, and so on until at last I found myself only too wide awake and too well conscious of my changed condition.

"All things about me appeared to have increased in proportions. I saw the shaggy, demoniac face of Dr. Zwatz hanging over me. I lay at the end of a delicate steel blade in the hands of the doctor—I, preposterously dwindled in person, no more than an inch in height and no more than a needle's thickness in girth. Standing near the couch on which my wife reclined in a dull stupor, the doctor, with a glass in his eye, gleamed over me, handling me with considerable gentleness and great skill, and then all at once I felt myself falling, and found myself immediately in the interior of my wife's eye."

The stranger now paused again, performed his little devotional gesture, then rested his elbow on the table and his brow on the edge of his palm for thirty seconds or more. When

he lifted his face tears were dripping from his lashes to his cheeks.

"Pardon me," said he, plaintively; "I had promised myself to be calm. But ah, it is not always possible to be calm. After one has passed through Gehenna one's wounds are apt to open afresh at any time.

"For forty-eight hours I remained in my wife's eye, and the discoveries I made therein I am going to publish in a book some day—I mean those of a purely scientific character, for I shall never be tempted to record those of a strictly personal nature, partly in the interest of humanity and partly in the interest of morality.

"I say I remained in my wife's eye for forty-eight hours, and I escaped by the rarest chance while she at noon was doing up her hair in front of her dressing-case. I had worked myself out of her eye into the corner of her lid, and in a moment she wiped me away like a gnat. I fell, luckily, into a pot of cold cream—an incident the doctor had not calculated on, and a happy one for me, for my person absorbed the cream and at once began to develop. I kept myself secreted in the jar until my wife left the room, and then, looking cautiously around, I descended to the floor by the lace trappings of the bureau. What I learned in the jar of cold cream I turned to use. My wife had a habit of bathing in milk—a luxurious habit—and I found the bath still unemptied. I plunged in, and the process of absorption began again—a pleasurable process that put me to sleep—and when I woke I rang for the servant. It was only after several days and one hundred and twenty milk baths that I acquired my natural proportions. But in the meanwhile I made some inquiries, and learned that on the day of my deliverance my wife had set out for the Continent with my too intimate and too ingenious friend, the doctor.

"My mission in life," said the stranger, rising, "is the search for my friend. I understand that he came over here last Spring, and that he is somewhere in this State, and I hope

to have a consultation with him—at six paces in some remote and secluded spot.

"Now let me thank you once more for your excellent fare, and thank you sincerely for the attention you have given me," added the stranger, and thereupon he bowed and took leave.

During the whole scene the Archbishop maintained his apostolic decorum, and considering the provoking circumstances, my wife behaved cleverly, but the look she gave the "poor gentleman" as he passed out of the door was the look the Caliph Vathek gave when he sought to do execution on some one of his favored subjects.

At the Academy, behind the scenes, that night I recognized at once our afternoon visitor when Bramble introduced the English comedian, Mr. Manning, billed there for his first appearance in his farcical drama, entitled "Designs and Blinds," and I must confess, though I liked the interlude at my house better than the evening drama, I was charmed, nevertheless, on both occasions with the talents of the man—his dry humor, his vivacious quietude and his inimitable grimaces.

The bold idea of bearding my lady in the presence of His Grace originated with Bramble. Entirely unknown to me—for otherwise I am not sure how I should have passed the ordeal—Bramble had persuaded his friend to enact the comedy I have described, and he had at the same time assumed all risks.

Of course, I paid for the supper after the play. And one of the memorable ones it was! Manning stood the test well, and I held my own, for a wonder. But Bramble!—I never saw him so doubled up; he had to be carried home like a bundle of old clothes. Jonquil, always famous in leading an attack, suffered a slight stroke of paralysis for the fourth time within the year, and yet I do not, by any means, altogether despair of him, since I am so confident that none of us, except "my widow," will ever survive the redoubtable General.

RONDEAU

IN A COPY OF OMAR KHAYYÁM

SEEK Him of Naishapur, ye sad at heart,
 And ye who wander through the throbbing mart
 Of Life, and find not what ye seek, nor know
 That, glancing high, ye see it not below,
 And dreaming of the Whole, Ye miss the Part.

And Ye who bare your Breast before the Dart
 Of Love, and wooing Kisses, reap the Smart
 Of jealousy—smile through your tears and go
 Seek Him of Naishapur.

Ah, Sweet! I prithee, be not sad; nay, start
 With Hope a-nestling in thy Soul; with Art
 Thou *mayest* wear the Rose, and others sow,
 Until thy Life a very Garden grow;
 But, if it wither, and thy Joy depart,
 Seek Him of Naishapur!

RICHARD B. GLAENZER.



HEARTILY APPROVED

SUDDENRICH—What do you think of a college education for a young man?

FRIEND—What do you think of making of your son?

"Oh, nothing in particular."

"Just the thing."



PERFECTION

THIS is the perfect day—nor sun, nor blue,
 Nor breeze, nor green has aught therewith to do;
 A glance, a smile, a word, and all is right;
 For oh, my love, my day is only You.

EDWIN L. SABIN.

DOROTHEA, PHILANTHROPIST

By Stewart Edward White

I HAD conceived a huge joke wherewith to amuse Dorothea, so I entered briskly, unannounced, without greeting. From the depths of my ulster pocket I produced in a most business-like way a small alarm clock, which I placed on the table. Then I took off my coat and flung it over a chair. Dorothea remained silent, a curled-up fluff of white on the hearth rug. I judged she was paralyzed with astonishment.

"I have made five calls this evening," I remarked, importantly, "all through the efficient aid of that alarm clock. Before going into a place I set it for ten minutes ahead. When it goes off, I sit calm and unmoved until the last stroke of the bell. Then I get up and go. It worked all right except once, when I struck a house where they had an alarm bell that went off when the furnace was about to explode. There was a bit of excitement there."

And then I stopped, bewildered, for I had come entirely to the end of my joke some ten minutes ahead of schedule time. Casting about for the reason, I discovered it in the lack of Dorothea's interruptions. Then I looked at Dorothea.

"What's the matter?" I inquired, solicitously.

The doleful little figure stirred.

"I've made a fool of myself," it said, mournfully.

"Have any help from anyone?" I asked.

Not a gleam of indignation. I grew alarmed at last.

"Tell me about it," I begged, with real sympathy.

Dorothea pulled single hairs from

the rug and cast them on the fire. After a bit it became evident why the ancients sacrificed in the open air. Dorothea elevated her small nose and sat on her feet in the big arm-chair.

"I've been good to someone," said she at last.

"And the shock of an unwonted action has disturbed you?" I suggested.

"Out of pure kindness of heart," went on Dorothea, unmoved.

"Tell me about it," I cried, with new enthusiasm.

"You know Teddy Davis?"

"Yes."

"Well then, you know how young he is—a mere child."

"Six months older than you."

Dorothea would not even counter.

"And he has been coming to me for advice. He is so young, and he hadn't the first idea of what girls like, and he was so much in love with that little Reynolds thing, and he is such a nice boy. Don't you see?"

"Quite," said I, gravely.

"He used to get into frightful scrapes with her, and I'd tell him how to get out of them."

"Having had more experience," said I—merely by way of comment.

"He was awfully grateful for it, and he was so nice about it that after a while I began to tell him a little of what to say when he wasn't in a scrape. You see, I, being a girl, could know better what girls like."

"Sort of *Cyrano* and *Christian*," I interpolated; "the 'I-your-soul, you-my-beauty' act, eh?"

"That's it. Only after a while I got

too interested in just *saying* things. I didn't think whether girls would like them or not—just whether they were bright or not. That's where I lost."

"Penalty of being clever," I remarked, sententiously.

"Then I am clever?" snapped in Dorothea, eagerly.

"In this world the punishment does not always fit the crime. The remark was general," said I.

Dorothea sank back.

"The things I told him were good, anyway," she continued, after a moment. "For instance, 'Now,' said I, 'when she accuses you of jollyng, you must say, 'Ah, but you jolly with your eyes!' When she accuses you of being a mere boy, you must say, 'I have only lived since meeting you.' When she accuses you of being cruel, you must say, 'How could I be aught but heartless after seeing you?' When she comes into the room some time, you must be slangy and say, 'Sit down and make yourself homely,' and then when she looks doubtful, you must add, 'for heaven has not done it for you.' And——"

I broke in at this point with great indignation.

"Dorothea," said I, severely, "of all the sentimental, cheap-novel silliness, that is the worst!"

"Do you think so?" she asked, anxiously. "But anyway," she went on, somewhat comforted, "I told him what to say when she informed him

that if she let him do that he would have no respect for her."

"What is it, Dorothea, what is it?" I cried, thoroughly aroused.

"Don't you wish you knew!" said Dorothea, provokingly. The joy of recital, than which Dorothea knows none greater, was bringing back her good humor.

"Then came the Barclay dance. I had told Ted lots of new things to say, and I felt interested, so when I saw them go into the conservatory I slipped in after them and hid. I knew all about it, anyway," said Dorothea, deprecatingly, "and I just wanted to see how it worked. Ted was always so vague."

"I mind me," quoth I, in a musing tone, "of an ancient proverb or wise saw concerning eavesdroppers and what they hear."

"Don't be horrid!" Her voice became tearful again. "*What* do you suppose? The first thing I heard was that little Reynolds thing asking, 'Well, Ted dear, what did she spring on you this time?'—slangy little cat!—and then Ted told her everything I had told him, and they just had fits over it."

Dorothea was getting very doleful again. She looked on my augmenting symptoms.

"If you laugh," she asserted, solemnly, "I shall *scream*!"

But she did not scream. She merely hit me an indefinite number of times with a sofa pillow.



WHAT IS LOVE?

"OH, let me, dearest maid," he cries,
 "My fond affection prove;
 Pray answer now, without disguise,
 And tell me what is love."

The maiden pauses, and pretends
 The theme to weigh and quiz;
 And then replies: "It all depends
 On what your income is!"

THE ROSE OF HEART'S DELIGHT

By Justus Miles Forman

MR. GERALD LIVINGSTON sat on the *terrasse* of the Café du Panthéon and swore, wickedly and with point. Jimmie Rogers, across the little marble-topped table, screwed about in his chair and looked vaguely apologetic.

"I don't see how I'm to blame," he said, plaintively, "because my sister wants to come over and play. I can't stop Jessica. You know well enough I'd rather go to Concarneau with you than to Scotland with her, but hang it! I'm simply out of the running for the Summer, that's all there is of it."

"When are you leaving Paris?" growled Livingston.

"To-morrow evening, night boat Calais-Dover. I'll run up from London to Liverpool next day and meet the *Lucania*."

"Sweet mess you leave me in!" said Livingston, resentfully. "What in Gehenna am I going to do? I spent an hour last night down at the club trying to get Simmy Simmons to go to Concarneau with me. I even lowered myself to a compromise on St.-Malo or Dinard, but he's making little wax horses up in the Campagne Première stables—they tie a piebald Arab out in the courtyard for him every day—and you couldn't get him away with a rope. I've a jolly good notion to cut up to Scheveningen and get some bathing. It's always interesting there, interestingly indecent."

"Why don't you go somewhere near?" suggested Jimmie. "Your governor may turn up any day, you know. He's in Naples."

"Yes—bless him!" agreed Livingston. "He's pottering about Pompeii

under a pith helmet and a green umbrella, squandering the money that he might save and will to me on spurious little statuettes elaborately mutilated as to noses and arms. I could take him to the shop where they're made. As for the places near here, I'm sick of them. I won't go to Barbison and I won't go to Fontainebleau, and I hate Crécy. Crécy and Czerny la Ville are overrun with things in limp skirts and spectacles, who sit under umbrellas and paint sheep and poplar trees. I ran into a drove of these budding geniuses once two years ago at Czerny. They were working under a silly little ass of an American who wore his hair down over his eyes and pretended he was French. He'd once studied under Chase in America, and while he couldn't paint well enough to white-wash a fence, he had all manner of foolish little tricks and mannerisms—stolen from Chase. He painted with brushes about three feet long, and he'd make a little dab at arm's length, then run back about a rod and squint. He had a beautiful, studied pose for that squint. Then he'd spring at the canvas, hit it cruelly with a brush and go back and pose again. It was sickening. But every one of those admiring females tried to imitate him. You'd have died to see a whole line of them on a hill of an afternoon, painting poplar trees and dashing to and fro viciously with brushes like mahlsticks, for all the world like a fencing school. It turned me daffy in a day, and I came away."

Jimmie Rogers laughed. "The fools ye have always with you," he observed. "You might go to Grez."

"What's Grez?" demanded Livingston. "Never heard of it."

"Grez-sur-Loing, other side of the forest. Dead little white plaster town. Three people, a cow and two jackasses. Funny old white plaster hotel. Pretty river, though."

Livingston clinked a franc on the table and rose, yawning. "Doesn't sound exciting, very," he criticised. "Think I'll go to Scheveningen. Give Jessica my love and be good. See you in September."

Then he strolled up the Boul' Miche' and looked in for a half-hour at that very improper resort for the ribald known as Bullier's.

The next day he spent ten minutes over an *Indicateur Chaix*, after which he put a steamer box and a suit-case into a *fiacre*, and taking his bicycle over his lap, drove to the Gare de Lyon.

A curious and singularly unsafe looking omnibus rolled and swayed and wobbled over the two kilometers between the country railway station and the village of Grez. Livingston wagered countless louis with an imaginary second self that the ark would seize on the first turning as an Ararat.

Nothing so disastrous happened, however. The ark left the poplar-bordered highroad, dived into a hollow of the plain, and a little wooden sign hanging precariously from the yellowed wall said, "Grez s. L. Nemours 5 kilomètres."

Livingston perceived at once two of the three people whom Jimmie Rogers had described as constituting the human element of the populace; also the cow, also one of the jackasses. The other could be heard. Though distant he was not lost. Indeed, the town seemed to be growing. A yellow dog with three and a half legs came out and sniffed at the ark. He had a sort of triumphant air. Three of his supports were firm. None of the ark's was.

There stood at the door of the Hôtel Cheillon, smiling cavernously, a sprightly young thing of five-and-sixty, in red head-kerchief and meal-

bag waist and skirt tied none too securely.

At dusk he was served his dinner out in the queer little rustic loge built of boughs and gnarled roots, open on all sides, and just large enough to hold the round table. He was waited on by a big-eyed, red-cheeked country maid and two cats. The cats' part was to get under the girl's feet or to reach timid, suppliant paws to the knees of the young American. The girl brought Livingston's coffee and spanked the cat, not very severely.

The man laughed. "*Très mignons, les chats, hein?*" he suggested.

The girl bobbed, and Livingston gave her a louis. It appeared to produce temporary heart failure.

After his coffee he lighted a pipe and lounged out into the street. It was quite dark by now, and Grez was at dinner or going to bed.

Through lighted windows came the clink of dishes and bursts of household chatter, with now and then, by way of the spice of life, a howl from chastised infancy.

Livingston felt, all at once, curiously alien and lonely and out of it. "They're all at home, curse 'em!" he said, morosely. "Sordid beggars, if you like, but it's—its home." It was a long time since Livingston had known anything like a home. "If I'd stopped in town, now," he growled, "I'd be sitting at the Ambassadeur's or the Jardin de Paris drinking something cold and watching all the pretty American girls with their poppers and their mommers. And if I'd gone to Scheveningen I'd be hearing the band play in the Kur-saal and hobnobbing with Altessen. My dear boy, you're an ass! a silly ass!"

An hour later he was nestling his head in the pillows. "If something doesn't turn up to-morrow," he muttered, "back I go to civilization."

He woke in the morning suddenly, and with a sense of disaster. The air shivered with a strange clamor. Then he smiled. Two of the inhabitants of Grez were braying as if their

hearts or lungs would burst, and from the hotel garden a peacock screamed uncannily. "Oh, that will do for a rising bell!" said Livingston.

He dressed and wandered down through the lonely garden toward the river on which it bordered. "*Grand jardin bosquet bordant la rivière,*" said the hotel correspondence paper.

The garden was full of geraniums and mignonette and little spice pinks and single roses. Over in a corner stood a group of tall hollyhocks. Something grew tight in the man's throat, and a little pain came into his heart. His mind went back with a jump to New Haven and his four years under the big white Y on the blue flag, and to Her. In Her garden there were hollyhocks, over by the fence in a corner, as here.

"Damn!" said Livingston, and began to whistle. "I'll go up to Paris this noon," he declared. Then he went down under the little grove of gnarled lindens to the bank of the river, where the *bateaux de pêche et de promenade* were moored, and his heart stood still again.

"No, I won't," he exclaimed, inwardly, with great decision. "Oh, my Lord! what a beauty! what an unthinkable, unbelievable beauty!" Then added aloud, in a state of confusion bordering on paralysis: "Oh—er—good-morning—er. Beautiful day, isn't it?"

"*Comment, monsieur?*" asked the girl, looking up. "*Bonjour, monsieur,*" she added, with a little, oh, a very little smile at the corner of her lips.

"You're a rose," said Livingston in his soul, "a deep, deep pink rose, born in a queen's garden. You're all the beautiful, indescribable things that ever came into men's dreams and died on the waking—all of them put together. Oh, the gods must have been happy when you were born!" And then aloud: "*Mille pardons, mademoi—er—madame.*"

The smile at the corners of the maddening lips became a shade less ghost-like, and something flickered in two big cornflower eyes.

"They're too big," complained Livingston to his soul. "It's uncanny to have such big eyes. I'd go clear off my head if I should look at them for ten seconds."

"Alas, this chain!" sighed the vision.

Livingston wondered when he could have heard such a golden voice before, and decided that it must have been in church during the Sanctus. He made a mental vow to attend divine worship more faithfully hereafter.

"This chain! It has made of itself a hopeless tangle." The eyes looked tragic distress.

Livingston forced his legs and tongue from paralysis. "If I might be permitted, mademoiselle," he begged, and knelt by the little post where the boat's painter was made fast.

The chain was not in the least tangled or tied. It was merely wrapped twice about the post. A babe might have freed it. For an instant an unworthy suspicion flickered through the mind of Mr. Livingston. He turned his head. A hand hung at the level of his eyes, long, slim, white, blue veined, pink palmed as a Bouguereau nymph's. His blood rose and sang.

"If I dared kiss that," he said fiercely to his soul, "I would gladly roll off this bank and drown. My life would have been well spent."

The girl sprang into the boat. He was annoyed. He had hoped to assist her.

He fetched oars—such clumsy things for those slim hands! The girl dipped them pensively and looked up. The boat was a yard from shore.

"That chain—" she murmured.

"Heaven bless the chain!" murmured Livingston, with fervor.

"—was most difficult. Monsieur is clever—at chains."

"I hope, mademoiselle, that I shall never meet with anything more difficult. I know that I shall never meet with anything more agreeable."

The girl smiled and rowed away. In the middle of the tiny stream she pulled a water lily and sniffed it.

"For a so polite little speech," she said, her face buried in the lily, "monsieur deserves more than—chains." She placed the lily ostentatiously on the stern seat of the boat, and regarding it with care, pulled through the arch of the stone bridge, while Livingston held his breath.

The sprightly creature who had welcomed his advent the day before—inquiry revealed that it was old Madame Chevillon who owned the hotel—came and chattered with him over his breakfast.

Monsieur intended to stay some days? Livingston flourished a *croissant* and beamed on her largely. Monsieur had every intention of staying for weeks—months—probably forever, he answered her.

Madame Chevillon seemed alarmed and retreated in a speedy waddle to the scullery, where she held excited communion with the red-cheeked maid, and the two stared in turns at the mad Englishman through the little window.

Livingston was meditating. "She went away in one of the hotel boats," he answered. "It is not to be supposed that she will burn or sink that boat for the sake of walking home. *Ergo*, she will return as she went. That river bank struck me as rather a good place to sit and read. I might even make foolish little sketches."

He found "The Seven Seas" in his bag, and hastened with it to the river. The boat was still absent. "Here I stay," he said, with decision, "if it takes a month," and opened the book. It took about an hour.

At the sound of gentle splashing he raised his head, and was conscious of a strong internal disturbance beneath his left ribs. A syringa bush partially screened him, and he waited behind it while the boat drifted toward the stake, but as the prow touched land he caught and held it.

The girl's back had of course been toward him, but as she stood up in the swaying boat and turned, she saw him and gave a little scream; immediately afterward she sat down with some decision.

"I'm sorry," said Livingston, meekly. "I held it as steady as I could."

"I hadn't seen you," said the girl. "You—you frightened me."

Livingston sighed. "I know I'm not handsome," he admitted.

He was rewarded by a momentary vision of very white, even and shining teeth. "Are you trying to make me say that you are beautiful?" she asked. "I shall disappoint you. I shall say that you are a perfect hobgoblin."

"I am crushed," asseverated Livingston. "Do you want to do anything else to me, or will you get out now? I intend holding the boat very still this time."

The girl rose, balancing herself like a rope dancer. Then she looked at the chain. "Perhaps," she suggested, "perhaps you would give me your hand."

Livingston saved himself as by a miracle from falling into the water. Then both of the slim, cool hands were in his for an instant, with the quick pressure of her weight, and she was beside him on the bank.

The face of each was scarlet. Livingston made fast the boat while the girl rescued her bunch of flowers. "Aren't they beautiful?" she murmured.

Livingston looked into her eyes. "Larkspur, that's it!" he cried triumphantly to his soul. "They're the color of larkspurs! I—I believe they are the most beautiful things I ever saw," he answered.

The crimson spread back to the little ears. "But you aren't looking at them!" she cried.

"I have but one pair of eyes," complained the American.

"It appears," observed the girl, with dignity, "that monsieur is clever at other things than—chains." And she moved toward the little gate in the wall which gave on the neighboring garden.

"Oh, dear!" said she, at the gate, "I have dropped a flower. However," very carelessly, "it is of no consequence whatever."

Livingston fastened the flower in

his buttonhole. "Politeness doesn't demand that I agree with all your opinions," he said.

Up at the hotel he maneuvered Madame Chevillon into a corner and demanded information. "Monsieur doubtless speaks of Mademoiselle St. Roques," decided this lady. "*Qui est Mademoiselle St. Roques? Personne ne sait pas.* What would you? *On dit qu'elle chante dans un café à Paris.*"

"Sings in a café!" cried Livingston. "Never!"

"Comment?" begged Madame Chevillon. "Every Summer, since three, four years, she has lived with the good Mère Piot, next door to the hotel—*mademoiselle et sa tante, une vieille dame très gentille.* Monsieur has seen the aunt? Yes? Mademoiselle has permission to use the hotel boats. What would you? There is no one else to use them. She commonly makes her promenade *en bateau* in the morning."

"Sings in a café in Paris!" said Livingston again. "That girl? Nonsense!"

The next morning he was down in the garden before the asses and the peacocks had finished their matins.

A vision in pink muslin sprigged with little roses knelt at the landing stage. "This chain!" it murmured, in distress.

"Heaven bless the chain!" said Livingston, with fervor.

The vision indulged in a faint smile. Livingston's heart sprang to the top of his throat and turned somersaults there.

"It is a beautiful morning," he observed, between somersaults.

"I strained my wrist yesterday," said the vision, irrelevantly, "rowing that boat. The boat is very heavy."

Livingston advanced with the light of decision in his eye. "There is but one thing to be done," he said, firmly. "I cannot permit you to miss your morning promenade. You must be rowed, since you cannot row yourself."

He began to unfasten the painter.

The vision looked at him with big round eyes. "Monsieur is *very* amiable," innocently, "but I really was—was not thinking of rowing this morning. I only came over to look at the boat."

Then the vision sauntered pensively toward the gate in the wall. A close observer might have detected a glint not altogether childlike in the blue eyes.

Livingston stood with his mouth open. "Well, I'll be—" he began, and failed. "I'll be—the little fiend!"

The next morning he was down as early as before. The vision was there again, in pink muslin sprigged with little flowers, and carrying three deep pink roses still wet with dew.

"This—" began the vision, sweetly.

"Heaven bless it!" declared Livingston, impulsively.

"I was not about to speak of the chain," was the answer, in a sudden access of dignity, but with lips not quite under control.

"May I venture to beg," said the man, very humbly, "that as mademoiselle's wrist is incapacitated, I may have the honor, the unspeakable honor, of rowing mademoiselle along the course of this very attractive stream?"

The vision seemed startled.

"Madame, my aunt, would die of horror," she asserted.

"Madame is in the habit of rising early?" inquired the tempter.

"Oh, no," hurriedly; "madame will not be up for—for an hour yet."

"In that case," declared Livingston, in triumph, "we might row—for an hour—without in the least risking the life of madame, your aunt."

The vision laughed, and protested. "I am certain that your reasoning has a moral flaw somewhere."

"Reason," said Livingston, as he pulled under the low, sounding arch of the stone bridge, "and morals, as you should have been taught earlier in life, have nothing whatever to do with each other. I show you by perfectly sound logic that our taking advantage of a gorgeously beautiful morning can in no way endanger the

life of madame, your aunt, who lies sleeping yonder, and you immediately assail my morals. You have no more sense of logic than——"

"Than what?" demanded the girl.

"Than any other woman."

Dew lay on the grass of the stream's bank. Dew lay beaded on the rushes and lily pads. The unutterable freshness and fragrance of a Summer morning, with all nature washed clean overnight, filled the air, and there was the glad sense of running water, of green things growing, of gardens and of mating birds.

Livingston threw out his arms and sniffed with delight. The girl's eyes sparkled. "Isn't it wonderful?" she cried; "isn't it glorious?" His eyes answered her. "Now, if you were alone," she continued with scorn—he made a gesture of abhorrence—"you would spoil it all with tobacco smoke." He looked guilty. "But if you think you are going to be allowed to do so while I am here you are mistaken. It sha'n't be spoiled." A fish leaped near the boat, its fins glistening in the sunlight. "What do you do here in our little Grez, monsieur?" she asked. "So few come here."

"I wait for the early morning to arrive," he replied, sighing. "Alas, the days are very long."

The girl's lips twitched and he had a moment's glimpse of larkspur eyes. "*Mais sérieusement!* to sketch, to paint?"

"Well," he admitted, "I had some small thought of sketching when I came. It's out of my line, though—trees and things."

"Your line? But what is your *métier*, then?"

"Girls," said Livingston.

"Oh," responded the vision, coldly.

"I—that is—oh, you know, I mean—oh, damn!"

The vision appeared much shocked. There was no mistaking the tone of Livingston's last remark.

"How do you know, monsieur," she demanded, "that I do not understand English?"

"Oh, I say!" gasped the man. "Of course you don't, though," he

continued, more comfortably. "But about the girls, you know, I want to explain. You see, my line is making drawings of good-looking women in smart clothes; men, too, of course, to some extent; sketchy, unfinished, *chic* sort of things. The magazines of my native soil demand such libels on art. It is believed that I do them well. I don't, really."

"Oh!" breathed the vision, delightedly. "Will you make a sketch of me? Not that I—I don't mean that I'm—I'm—well, worth drawing, you know, but I want to see you do it. Please!"

Livingston dropped his oars and looked at her with dismay. "Draw you!" he gasped. "You! *Merci, non! Jamais de la vie!* I've given up trying to gild the gates of heaven or paint fire into an opal. *Merci, non!*"

The girl wrinkled a small nose. "That is rather pretty," she admitted. "Still, I should have liked to be drawn." She trailed a hand in the water and lifted it, dripping. It flashed a shower of diamonds and pearls. "If you pull to the left of the little point of rushes, monsieur," she said, "we shall come to where I gathered my flowers *avant-hier*."

The boat brushed through a hedge of rushes that closed again high overhead, and floated lazily in a backwater, a nook shut in on all sides by waving green. The water was covered with strange little waxen blossoms, white petaled, yellow centred. The girl pulled an armful. "Are they not beautiful?" she murmured.

Livingston looked into the larkspur eyes, and the blood sang in his veins.

"I—I believe they are the most beautiful things I ever saw," he answered.

The crimson spread back to the little ears. "But you aren't looking at them!" she said.

"I have but one pair of eyes," complained the American.

The larkspur eyes were under cover. The bosom of the flower-sprigged muslin heaved.

"We must go back," the girl faltered; "it grows late."

Livingston's hand trembled on the oars. "Oh, you are the rose of heart's delight!" he cried, in a shaking whisper, and the boat broke through the wall of rushes.

The next morning there was no pink muslin at the boat landing, no larkspur eyes to hide themselves behind absurdly long black lashes.

Livingston raged along the river bank. "Suppose she should be ill!" his heart cried, dumbly. And a ready mind conjured visions of his angel stretched, pale and suffering, on her bed. For the first time in his life he counted every hour of the day as it dragged by.

The next day it rained. Livingston stopped drearily indoors and cursed himself—if the Recorder ever takes such things seriously—into a permanent billet in Gehenna.

The morning after, she was coming through the gate in the wall as Livingston reached the river's edge. He turned a reproachful face.

"It is you, monsieur!" she said, with great surprise.

"I," he agreed. "It is good of you to notice. What an eternity!" he sighed, somewhat obscurely.

"Two days?" queried the maid.

"Two months!" said the man, "each of thirty days, and every day of twenty-four hours. What do you know about the passage of time?"

The girl smiled, but she saw Livingston's face, and the smile somehow died.

"I have been reading to madame, my aunt," she said, presently, "the Essays of Monsieur Montaigne. Selected essays," she added, hastily, and turned pink.

Livingston laughed. They pulled up the river swiftly, breathing in the freshness of the morning, exquisite, aromatic, a blended essence of all delightful odors, pungent, almost, as a pain. The tall green rushes parted for them a moment, then swung to place and nodded in the little breeze. The girl pulled an armful of waxen flowers.

"Are they not beautiful?" she murmured.

"I believe they are the most—" began Livingston.

"That will do," interrupted the girl, and the larkspur eyes retreated behind the long lashes.

"You're not polite," complained the American.

The girl sniffed. Then she extracted a flower from the great cluster. "Would monsieur like one of—of the most beautiful things in the world?" she inquired. There was a slight suggestion of malice in the tone.

He looked at the black lashes. There was the swiftest flash of blue. "Monsieur would like two," he said.

The girl made a little exclamation of impatience. "Now you are becoming very tiresome," she declared; "and if you don't reform we shall have to go back at once." But she did not look wholly offended.

"These flowers," she said, presently, "must be arranged in a grand bouquet for madame my aunt. Monsieur shall see how clever I am *comme fleuriste*."

Then she set to work with the cluster of flowers, and as she worked she sang. She sang the great air out of "Samson et Dalila"—

*"Réponds—réponds à ma tendresse!
Verse-moi—verse-moi l'ivresse!"*

She sang in a little, low, hushed voice, just over her breath—a contralto voice, rich unspeakably, golden clear, with that strange, thrilling vibrato that every great voice has when its power is held in check. Livingston crooked his feet under the thwart and strained his hands on the gunwales. "For God's sake, don't make an ass of yourself now!" he cried savagely to his soul. "Look away somewhere. Say the multiplication table over backward. Count the cows in that meadow. *Don't* make an ass of yourself!"

The voice thrilled and quivered like the C string of a violin, like a cello dreaming of its German forests when the world was young.

"Do you suppose she realizes what she's singing?" said Livingston to his soul. "Do you suppose she does?"

In truth, it wasn't a fortunate selection.

The girl threw overboard a handful of dead leaves, sighed pensively and sang:

"*Bonjour, Suzon, ma fleur des bois.*

"Why don't you applaud my little concert?" she demanded, mockingly.

Livingston raised a sober face. "You make the very soul of a chap grow weak," he said, half-laughing. "You would make an angel forget himself!"

Quick tears sprang to the blue eyes. "*Ah, non, non, non, mon ami!*" she cried, and a little flush spread over her cheeks. "I—I'd trust you," she added, softly.

He gave a low, inarticulate exclamation and leaned toward her pleadingly. In a flash the larkspur eyes read his face and hid behind the "grand bouquet" of water flowers.

"Stop it!" cried Livingston's good angel. "Do you want to spoil everything?"

"It grows late," the girl faltered; "we must go back."

As they pulled homeward Livingston said, to break the silence that was becoming intolerable: "You have the most wonderful voice I have heard. You must have sung a great deal."

The girl gave him a glance of alarm. "What do you mean?" she said, swiftly. Then, after a moment, "Yes; I sing a great deal to madame, my aunt, and—to my friends."

She bent over the flowers, but her eyes were still troubled when the landing was made at the hotel garden. At the gate in the wall she paused an instant. "The other day," she began, critically regarding the flowers, "I called you a—hobgoblin." She opened the gate and passed through it. "You aren't a hobgoblin," she added, from the other side; "you're very good-looking." And she banged the gate.

The next morning she met him with a wholly irresponsible and apparently causeless giggle. Indeed, the hour of the morning's promenade *en bateau*

might safely be described as a prolonged giggle.

When the gate in the wall had finally closed, the American stood regarding it in a sort of trance. "Well, I'll be—" he began, and failed. "They say God is especially kind to fools. What an overwhelming, elemental tenderness He must feel toward the chap who thinks he knows anything about women!"

The morning after, he came down in a mask of tragedy. The Rose of Heaven's Delight was there before him, all sweetness, all dainty seriousness, with a half-humorous deprecation of the mood of yesterday in her eyes.

"Monsieur is not well?" she demanded, regarding him anxiously. "It is a migraine? *mal aux dents?* Monsieur is *ennuyé* of Grez?"

"I didn't sleep," said Livingston, and pulled upstream. The tall reeds bent and nodded as they passed. He pulled a crumpled telegram from his pocket and threw it into the bottom of the boat. "I must go to Paris today," he said, looking over the fields. "My father is there. This came last night."

The girl drew a little sharp breath and caught her clasped hands to her breast swiftly. There was a long silence while the man stared out miserably over the green and yellow fields and the girl sat with round, wide eyes and paling cheeks.

A little fish sprang into the sunlight and landed most unexpectedly on a lily pad, where it flopped in panic, ludicrous in the face of heaven. A scent of thyme and rose gardens came down on a vagrant breeze, fragrant as memories of lost childhood, and overhead the tall, plumed reeds nodded always, swishing their green leaves and whispering together.

"Why, then—" said the girl, softly, and stopped, because her voice was not yet safe; "why, then—it's over, monsieur—our little promenades *en bateau?* our little matinées? I'm sorry, monsieur, but doubtless monsieur is quite ready to go back to Paris—*déjà ennuyé.*" The voice quivered and ceased, and she tried to

laugh, but it was a pitiful little unsuccessful laugh.

Livingston raised a white, drawn face. "God ha' mercy," said he, "for I love you better than I love life or my worthless soul. There isn't an inch of me, body or spirit, that doesn't thrill and ache for you. I've loved you from the first moment I saw you by the river bank. When I die, and they ask me what I've done as an excuse for living, I shall boast that I've known you and worshipped you, and they'll say my life was well spent. Oh, you beauty—you unthinkable, unbelievable beauty! You're a rose," he whispered, "the Rose of Heart's Delight. You're all the beautiful, indescribable things that ever came into men's dreams and died on the waking—all of them put together! Oh, the gods must have been happy when you were born!"

Then for a long time there was silence. The girl sat in the stern with her hands over her face and sobbed shiveringly.

After a time he spoke again, gently. "Ah, Heart's Delight, try not to think it madness," he said; "I beg you, by the greatest, tenderest, fiercest love in all God's world, to marry me."

The girl's hands dropped. "Marry you?" she breathed. The wide blue eyes searched him. Fear was in them—agony. Love was in them, and the birth of an awful joy. "Marry you?" she breathed. Then the sobs came again. "*Ah, non, non, non, mon cœur!*" she cried, brokenly. "*Ah, non!* you—you don't know what you ask! You don't know what I am!" She faced him defiantly, the blue eyes full of a hopeless pain. "I am a singer in a café in Paris!" she went on, wildly. "I sing in a café every evening—a little café—a common café, for fifteen francs the day, to keep body and soul together. Do you hear—do you understand? My father was a nobleman, a marquis.

He died, and there was no one to care for me. Don't you hear me? I sing in a café!"

Then the man looked up with a great smile that seemed to carry balm for all tears and troubles. "And if you ground a barrel-organ in front of the Moulin Rouge," he scoffed, "I should still say that I love you better than life or my hopes of heaven. Heart of my soul, will you marry me?"

The girl stared at him again, wide-eyed. "Oh!" she breathed. "Are there such men? You'd marry me—me, *une chanteuse des cafés*? But I mustn't let you—ah, I mustn't let you!"

"Then," said Livingston, "you'll drive me to crime. I shall be compelled to abduct you and make you marry me."

The girl threw up her head with a little laugh that was a half-sob. "And to-day you must go to Paris?" she asked, after a little.

"I must," said the man, gloomily. "My governor'll be there a fortnight." "Come back!" whispered the Rose of Heart's Delight.

He threw himself at her feet with a glad, confused cry. "*Ah, non; ah, non!*" she gasped, in panic; "*Ne touche pas!*" Then presently divining the pain that was in his eyes, she turned with a wonderful little smile and took his face between slim pink palms and kissed his lips. "*Ah, roi de mon cœur!*" sobbed the Rose of Heart's Delight.

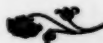
"This chain—" began the girl, as they disembarked.

"Heaven bless the chain!" said Livingston, with fervor.

"I have a confession to make," she went on, turning very pink. "It—it was, after all, not very difficult to unfasten!"

She looked up with a plaintive, deprecatory smile.

"Heaven bless the chain!" said Livingston, firmly.



IN JUNE

AT night the garden calls me out;
Through perfumed aisles I go.
Red lilies with strange spotted cups
Sway softly to and fro.

Great, dusky moths drift silently
About the half-closed flowers,
And from a deep-blue sky the moon
Lets fall her silver showers.

Throughout the fragrant gloom, dear love,
Each night I search for thee;
Behind each clump of shimmering leaves
I peer expectantly.

Into each corner, dark and still,
Whence blackest shadows start,
I seek for thee, and find thee, love,
Nowhere but in my heart.

LUCY MORRIS.



RASH ADMIRATION

CLUBLEIGH—How do you like your tailor?

SPORTLEIGH—First rate! He's a fine gentleman! Why, I almost wish I could pay him what I owe him.



HOW IT HAPPENED

ELLA—How did you come to marry him? Were you in love with him?

CARRIE—No; but I didn't find it out until it was too late.



WILLING TO TRY HIM

HE—I have broken three girls' hearts.

SHE—Well, have you any money left?

THE GARDEN OF ROSE AND RUE

By Elsa Barker

I CALLED upon the gods to make me wise;
They drew away Love's broidered veil of lies,
And all the mystery the Moeræ know
Was hidden in the mazes of his eyes.

What do I care for gold—it is so cheap!—
Or Fame—the highest will not always keep!
But let me sing and linger in the sun
And love as only poets can—and sleep.

The palest lives some little blossoms bring
To deck Love's altar in the days of Spring.
Were it not so, why moves great Brahma's breath?—
The pain of birth were such a useless thing!

And after all is said and done, my dear,
Love is the reason of our being here;
Labor and Fame are but accessories,
And art itself but Love's superb veneer.

Yet oh, the pity of it all! the vain
Delight that fills again and yet again
The hollow world with little, yearning souls
To swell the awful sum of mortal pain!

O little hour of Love, so wild and sweet,
I gave my soul thy honeydew to eat,
And now the tear-sown pathway of the dead
Echoes the patter of thy flying feet!

The thorny rose of Love has one last sting,
Tipped with a poison strange and maddening,
Who grasps it close fears not the fire of hell—
To love and loathe the selfsame lovely thing.

My false Love whispers lies into my ear;
My listening soul laughs silently to hear—
The low, ironic laughter of the tomb,
Of merry skulls that grin from ear to ear.

Who dares to love unloved is strong and wise—
 The very gods look deep into his eyes;
 The veil of Isis trembles at his touch,
 And life or death holds naught to fear or prize.

O Silent Watcher of the Mystic Fire!
 When to thy sacred temple I retire
 To still my soul, between thine eyes and mine
 Falls like a veil the shadow of desire.

Look where yon travesty of Love stalks by,
 Linked arm in arm with Death—a smiling lie!
 The leering laugh of soulless pleasure brings
 The tears of pity to the lover's eye.

Poor Love, your white wings draggled in the mire,
 Your soul of mystery and eyes of fire
 Forever slandered or misunderstood,
 Your very breath of life a jest—for hire!

Oh, would you know how sweet a thing is Love,
 Go ask the loveless ones who starve for Love—
 The still, pale priest, the love-mocked Magdalen;
 They know, alas! how sweet a thing is Love.

The pain of Love has poisoned all the day.
 O cruel Love, that lures but to betray!
 And cruel the still whisper of the soul:
 "Like songs and worlds, this, too, shall pass away."

O Love, my Love, I pray you, do not weep;
 The world is full of tears, both dear and cheap.
 Is not our little hour too fair to waste?
 Oh, let us laugh and love, before we sleep!

Draw close the mystic garment of Love's bed.
 Here the dim future and the past are wed,
 And brooding Isis veils her mysteries,
 To whelm the world when you and I are dead.



THE WEALTHY COMBINE

WHIPPER—Well, I see there's a billion dollar trust at last.
 SNAPPER—Why, when did the milliners get together?



EPITAPH for a lifelong worker: He did all he could.

THE MAN OF ONE VICE

By Flora Bigelow Dodge

THEY were engaged to be married—Captain Jackson, the most popular man in Uncle Sam's Army, and Mrs. Malt, a little nobody from nowhere.

He had met her soon after distinguishing himself in the Cuban War, when he came up to New York, punctured and bruised, to rest and enjoy himself, and when he naturally would be most susceptible to feminine charms.

His most intimate friend maintained he must have proposed to her when he was drunk, as sober he could not have thought of anything so foolish, for *he* "knew the woman well"—this with a knowing wink—"and she was not the kind of woman a man would want to marry."

The friend liked to retail exploits of the Captain's hair-breadth escapes that he himself had witnessed down in Cuba—presumably from behind a tree. He had known the Captain from boyhood, and he recorded all kinds of adventures, not always hampered by cold facts, which so often spoil a good story. No, this woman was not good enough for him—nobody was good enough. The gallant Captain did drink—not even his best friend could deny that; but his heart was as big as all outdoors, and sympathy and kindness were his dominating characteristics. Everywhere he went he was beloved, from the time he was a little boy at a military school to now, when he was absolutely worshipped by little Mrs. Malt. From his own few good-for-nothing personal friends—discernment of character not being his strong point—to the little bootblacks who got to know

him in the streets of New York, the one-eyed woman near the ferry and the man that ran the elevator at the hotel—if one of them had a blighted affection, a dying mother or pecuniary embarrassment the Captain found it out first usually, and with his kindly smile would try to be of some real assistance, with the result that all felt happier for his acquaintance.

His sunburnt face with the scar across the forehead, mustache waving in the breeze and rough, whole-souled voice all brought an atmosphere of cheer and brightness that did not leave him even when he was a little intoxicated. When very drunk his whole nature became remorseful and introspective, and he turned to theological problems, with unshed tears in his eyes for a wasted existence. At these times he said he realized he should have been a clergyman—not a soldier. But he wasn't often *very* drunk.

With this guileless nature the gallant Captain, being occasionally imposed on, was not as rich as he otherwise might have been, and when he came to New York for his holiday after the war was over, and had helped most of his acquaintances out of the tight places they would soon slide into again, he stopped at a cheap hotel on Sixth Avenue, though he frequently sat in the gilded chairs of the Waldorf watching the dress parade and enjoying life after his own fashion. In this way he was able to have an extra dollar to spend on his friends' debts and send Mrs. Malt flowers that came from Fifth Avenue instead of from her own neighborhood.

Mrs. Malt lived in the same hotel

on the same floor, more handy to the roof than to the street. She had a sitting-room and a small bedroom that she shared with her child of ten.

Winter and Summer they were seen there mysteriously alone, and what was more natural than that the sympathetic Captain should notice that the lady had eyes red with weeping, that her clothes looked shabby-genteel, and that the little girl had the dirtiest, stub-nosed wax doll he had ever seen, which she cherished with passionate devotion? Even down in the noisy dining-room the doll was consulted about the food first, then the mother—and the three decided on very meagre meals, he thought. Something that one can't explain drew him toward that wax doll, with her moth-eaten blond curls half-hidden under a sunbonnet.

She was hanging sulkily over the little girl's shoulder one day down in the hall. They were evidently waiting for the mother to take them out, and with a military dash he went boldly up to them. By the time the mother came down he knew the child's name was Jessie, after her mother, and that the doll was Belinda. He learned, too, most of the incidents of Belinda's short and eventful life, from having been lost in a railway carriage to having her big wax toe eaten off by a mouse.

This was the beginning of the acquaintance. Within a few days he was a regular caller in the parlor under the gable, and drank tea with Mrs. Malt, Belinda and little Jessie instead of whiskey-and-sodas down stairs.

The room was far from pretty, but there were a few photographs of unmistakable ladies and gentlemen; the stuffy furniture was sensibly arranged for comfort; a large, practical workbasket with unfinished flimsy white garments rested near the student lamp, and there were books about that gave an atmosphere of culture to the room. He liked to be there with these mysterious people, and showed the fact plainly.

His most intimate friend one day

discovered the Captain's weakness for the lady. He was annoyed, as he had social aspirations for the Cuban hero, society being his own business. At first he tried to chaff the Captain about Mrs. Malt, and said, lightly:

"She ran away from her husband some years ago. You'd better find out if he's dead."

Captain Jackson frowned, squared his shoulders and thundered out:

"I don't know that it's any of your damned business, sir, whether my future wife's husband's dead or not!"

Then they changed the subject.

"Now look here, Jackson, I have asked for an invitation for you to the first private ball of the season, and the smartest. You're quite a hero, you know, and lots of people want to know you, and I'm going to take you about a little, even if you are engaged. It's good for you to have a few influential friends, particularly as you are to marry. You will see all the loveliest women in New York. You are getting so good I am worried about you. You don't drink any more, you go to church——"

"I tell you I'm in love, sir, and going to be married. What do you expect?"

"Yes, yes, I know all that. I only want some of these New York women to know what a brick a rough man like you can be; in society they see only things like me. They have all been reading about you, and have seen your picture in the papers. If you make your debut at Mrs. Factory's ball they'll be falling over each other to meet you, and you'll see the four crowned heads, and be swimming around in the smart set with Mrs. Terrence and all the rest of them. It's nothing against the pretty woman you're so loyal to for me to present you to some people of more position and wealth and fashion. Come along."

So Captain Jackson went to his first smart ball in New York, and was more than dazzled by all the gleaming necks and jewels that he saw and by the graciousness with which he was

welcomed by tuft-hunters. His nature was too simple to have any of his pleasure spoiled by the slightest suspicion that it was not his own personality half of them cared about.

He danced until his legs ached and beads of perspiration trickled down his face, wilted his collar and shriveled his shirt bosom. He was absolutely unconscious, enjoyed everything keenly, and found himself taking down to supper the hostess, who was the oldest lady in the room. His friend whispered to him that this was a great honor. She was a little bag of skin and bones held together with lace and diamonds.

He ate everything that appeared, and sailed into the champagne with the recklessness of a soldier. Suddenly the air seemed to grow close, the room swam, and his hostess looked more like a bird than ever.

He looked at her with disgust, and sang, softly:

"When we are married, why, what shall we do?
I can't be faithful, sweetheart, to you."

The lady gave a stern smile and said, politely, with a manner denoting that she had seen gentlemen in his condition before:

"What were you thinking about when you just sang, Captain Jackson?"

"I was thinking," he said, dreamily, with tears springing to his eyes, "that you made me feel so at home here. I feel quite myself—so natural that a sweet old Moody and Sankey hymn came back to me which I learned at my mother's knee, and I longed to sing it at your knee. You remind me something of my mother! She died when I was born. She was too old to have a child. . . . Don't you feel well?"

Mrs. Factory stiffened backward and gave an appealing look at the little millionaire on her right, who was convulsed behind his glass of champagne.

The Captain sighed, wiped his brow with his napkin, looked sadly round the table, and pushed his plate of ice savagely away from him, muttering:

"I don't want ice till I'm dead. Take it away."

"What a pity," began the hostess, drawing her shoulders up so that the hollows of her collarbones should not be so conspicuous—"what a pity that the rooms always get so hot at balls that one can hardly breathe; such a pity—"

The Captain turned sympathetically toward her with his head on one side.

"Ah," he said, drawing nearer, "music always makes me sad; it makes me think of my misspent life. I wish I were a clergyman, and could make you follow me, and sell your crown and hair and give up everything false and give to the poor; they need so much, so much! Here we are all eating too much, drinking too much and not wearing enough clothes!"

His eyes rested sadly on the lady's neck, which looked hardly strong enough to bear the weight of her jeweled head.

"What a pity you aren't a—clergyman," she said, sarcastically. "You seem so fitted to be one—"

Then she made the movement for rising from the table, and his friend came to the rescue, whispering:

"Come home with me at once; don't take Mrs. Factory up to the ballroom—you have had too much to drink. Just say good-night."

The Captain turned to his hostess and said, with great dignity and a most obsequious bow:

"What a pity I must say good-night! I fear—I am not—well." And then, putting his arm through his friend's, he murmured, reflectively: "'What a pity, what a pity!' It's a damned shame that woman can't say anything I can remember, except that!"

In a few moments the two were purring home in an electric cab. The Captain was penitent and stupid, his friend excited and annoyed. He could not miss this chance of giving him a piece of his mind.

"Well, you have made an awful ass of yourself!" he remarked.

"I know," answered the Captain, meekly.

"You've missed the chance of your life of getting into the arms of society, that were held out open to you——"

"Her arms were too thin. I wouldn't get into them if I could," he growled.

"And you're going to make an ass of yourself again——"

"I'm sure to," returned the Captain, wiping his eyes and opening the window.

"Before it's too late, think what you are doing—think!"

"I know, but I like the night air—I like to sleep out of doors; I'm used to it; it's in the blood; my father was a miner——"

"I don't want to hear the story of your life. I'm not thinking of that window—and don't you go to sleep. I want to talk to you—about your engagement to Mrs. Malt. Don't you see you're nothing but a great big overgrown baby. You know nothing of life and people; you know nothing about her past. What was she doing two years ago? Ha, ha! I know—ask her——" He laughed unmusic-ally. In the Captain's present humble frame of mind he dared talk to him frankly.

"I knew the husband she ran away from," he continued; "he hadn't a vice. She was just full of beans; he's dead, perhaps, now. You ask her about it yourself, and if she's honest she'll tell you the truth and make your hair curl."

"What are you daring to say? I know she'll tell me the truth; she's a Southern lady, sir. Do you know what that means? You needn't follow me, but I'm going up to her sitting-room—she said she would wait up for me. I'm almost ashamed to go, but I'm going, and I'll ask her to tell me about her past, and she'll tell me. I'll be married this week, and to-morrow, sir, you will hear what day. Good-night."

The Captain left him and walked carefully up to the top floor. His face looked haggard, but he was almost sober. She had never seen him look like that. His eyes were loveless and hard.

"Tell me," he said, "aren't you a good woman?"

He closed the door and leaned against it in front of her, taking off his hat and throwing it on the sofa. His eyes were fixed on the sewing in her lap. The look of pain that spread over her features was for the first time lost on him.

She raised her head proudly and said:

"Captain Jackson, you have every right to ask me that, although I hoped you wouldn't. I meant to tell you before we were married. I am not what the world calls a good woman. Our engagement you must consider broken."

She rose and tried to pass from the room, but he intercepted her.

"Sit down," he said, more gently, looking into her face. "Sit down and tell me all; I can understand anything, Jessie dear. I have been brutal, I know. I was just a little drunk. How you must have suffered!"

In his sympathy for her suffering he forgot his own shattered ideal, and only felt for her troubles. He knelt down beside her and buried his face between his hands on her knee. She laid her cool fingers on his head and moved them softly through his hair until she could control her voice, and then spoke:

"I married, very young, an old man, and for many reasons I learned to hate and despise him. He killed my senses, my ideals and my morals, and so one day I just ran away from him, through some reckless impulse. I took my child and a little money and came up to Baltimore. There I met a man who had known my husband. My courage, health and spirits appealed to him; I liked his kindness and thought he was fond of me. I enjoyed being alone there; but soon my child became ill, and I grew anxious and dull, and that bored him. I was worried about money matters, too, and didn't know how I should be able to manage with what I had, and my future looked dreary. He often told me how much money good-looking women make, and how much I

appealed to him, but in my trouble I felt I was losing him. I then realized for the first time that only one side of my nature appealed to him, and that when I was sad and lonely he would leave me for gayer companions.

"The doctor had told me that my child needed a trained nurse and some special treatment. Well, it was the same old story; I had the best nurses, the best doctors for little Jess. I played my part to the bitter end. I entertained him in the evenings, I sang, I laughed and talked and fell into his different moods. Oh, I worked hard enough for the money he gave me! Then, after six weeks, he went away for a few days. My child was better, and I realized then how I hated him—how there was no real kindness or generosity in him, how little he cared for me! The strain had been so awful I felt an old woman. Then he came back; he stopped to see me after his railway journey one evening. I didn't care how I looked that night, or what he thought. I flung myself down on the sofa and cried myself nearly sick, and told him that everything was over.

"He couldn't understand, and when he tried to put his selfish face near mine I could have killed him—I couldn't bear him close. He kept saying he couldn't understand why I was crying, now that the child was well, and I told him I was crying *because* the child *was* well, because now I *could* cry and could be natural, and not pretend anything any more. I told him I hated him, now that I knew what he was; knew that there was nothing good or honorable in his nature. He muttered something about my being hysterical, and having chosen my own life, and that I couldn't blame anyone but myself. Oh, he didn't understand anything of what I had been through; he just hadn't any soul, so he left me, and I ran up to my baby and kissed her until she woke crying. I shall never forget that night.

"The next day I left Baltimore and came to New York—these rooms. My husband has died since and I have

a little money for Jess—very little, as you know. I have hated men and kept to myself these last two years, until I knew you, with your unselfishness, your kindness. It has all been like a breath of heaven to me.

"You never tried to make up to me because you saw I was living alone and had no position. You aren't suspicious, like other men. Oh, I have learned and felt so much and changed so much! My reason for leaving my husband is my own secret. No woman wants to leave a man unless there are reasons driving her away. We all want protection and love. I could not have married you without telling you all this. I know how much a woman's purity means to a man. I felt I had no right to expect you to marry me when you knew. You know I always was putting off our wedding day, because I was *afraid* to tell you. I was afraid of losing you out of my life."

She stopped speaking, and it seemed in the silence as if each tick of the clock was the signal of her doom. The mental blow sobered the Captain. He could hardly believe his ears. She felt the struggle within him to master his emotion—to feel more for her than for himself.

At last he spoke, tenderly, raising his head from her knees and holding her two hands in his.

"Jessie, when I think of all the things that men do that women forgive; when I think of my own life in comparison to yours—why, I'm not fit to tie your shoe strings. I never really loved a woman before. I am sorry I was so brutal at first. You are too good for me. You *are* good—it shows in your face. We can be what we really want to be, and you and I shall be better helping each other. Your love will help me to overcome *my* great weakness. I didn't know how much I loved you until you told me all this, Jessie, dear. Why, the idea of breaking our engagement! Well, I guess not. If ever a woman needed a husband and protector it's you, dear. I understand so well what you went through—the struggle of it

all. That man couldn't feel for you, it wasn't in him; I know *just* how you suffered, and as for him, I'd like to break his neck. That is the kind of man that ought to be kicked; anyone who wouldn't appreciate a woman like you ought to be well kicked. My God! think of making love to a woman under those circumstances! No wonder your poor little face is sad! no wonder I loved you the first time I saw you with that child and the squash-faced doll! What a terrible thing it must be to lose one's illusions about people, to find people different from what you expected! Perhaps I am so stupid I don't see the illusions when I might. I know I'm a rough fellow, but I like to believe in my friends, and when we understand we usually can make allowances—just as we hope a higher power does for us. God isn't going to judge us as these damned women all judge each other.

"But tell me, Jessie, the name of that man; I'm going to marry you to-morrow—no more waiting for anybody—but I'm going to find that man to-night if he's in this city, and spoil his beauty. Tell me his name; where is he now?"

A knock at the door, and the intimate friend appeared. He looked disheveled and upset. His eyes met those of Mrs. Malt.

"You've been listening," said the Captain, with contempt.

"Only the last few words," said the friend, coloring slightly.

"Tell me his name, Jessie," the

Captain asked again, forgetting the third person in his eagerness.

"Captain Jackson," said Mrs. Malt, with a new light in her face he had never seen before, "if anyone has taught us anything we should acknowledge it; he taught me self-control and how to keep a secret."

"I want to tell you," began the friend—"I came up to tell you that I humbly apologize for having ever said anything against this lady. I feel I never knew her before, and you, my dear fellow, everyone knows, are no judge of human nature. I was anxious only for your happiness, and anxious about whom you were to marry; but I was wrong—she is worthy of you."

"I tell you—" began the Captain, excitedly.

But he was stopped by Mrs. Malt, who laid her hand on his shoulder and said:

"Let me speak first, dear. You have taught me to-night how to love more than I ever dreamed I could before, and—how to forgive. I have had one rule for myself always which I hope never to break, and that is, not to kill people's illusions. The man or woman who does that does harm in the world; let the world sleep in peace to-night, let us part in peace to-night, and may God give me strength to stand by your side as your wife and feel when life's journey is ended that I have kept you from seeing an idol shattered or a confidence misplaced."



AUTHOR TO EDITOR

LET brokers swindle the unwary
And sell them stock that nothing earns;
I choose investments literary
Because I get such quick returns.

G. L. H.

UNE DISTRACTION

Par Henri Lavedan

“VOUS voulez savoir,” nous répondit le baron Malten, “pourquoi je refuse de jouer aux cartes avec vous? Je vais vous le dire.”

Mais, tout d'abord, il faut se bien représenter le baron. C'est un homme qui porte à l'aise la cinquantaine, grand, l'air de quelqu'un, aux traits réguliers, avec des vêtements dont les plis sont aussi réguliers que les traits, des manières d'une froideur polie, circonspecte et que rien ne démonte. On sent que chez lui tout est en ordre comme dans une armoire flamande. Son esprit est aussi lent que sa parole. Il sait, mais son acquis prend un certain temps à se formuler et à déboucher de ses lèvres. Si les tortues s'exprimaient et que ce fût dans un salon, je suis persuadé qu'elles le feraient à la façon de Malten. Sa tenue est correcte et sobre, son geste parcimonieux, son sourire très rare, presque exceptionnel. Ancien capitaine de cavalerie de l'armée autrichienne, il a été forcé de quitter le service après Sadowa, où il a eu le genou broyé. Ce genou a pu être rétabli vaille que vaille, mais le baron a économisé de sa blessure une boiterie légère de la jambe gauche, qui n'est d'ailleurs pas sans grâce, et depuis, quand il marche, il a l'air de parader vaguement sur le Prater, et de chasser encore, par un reste d'habitude, le sabre absent, le joli sabre, ami intime des éperons, qui traîne et racle avec un bruit clair dans la vie bottée des cavaliers de tous les pays. En somme, c'est l'étranger, demi-muet, qui fait bien dans un château durant la saison des chasses. On le sait pauvre et fier, on l'invite—plus comme Au-

trichien que comme baron—il accepte avec hauteur, et comme il est très bien élevé, qu'il écoute, rempli d'une attention presque disciplinaire, on lui trouve de l'esprit latent et chacun le déclare d'un commerce agréable.

Et maintenant que vous le voyez tant bien que mal, écoutez-le:

“C'est une histoire,” dit-il, “une petite histoire très ordinaire, très peu intéressante. Voilà. Sachez-le donc —j'ai triché au jeu.”

Tout le monde à ces mots se regarda, ces dames, nous, les deux valets sournois, qui emportaient sur les plateaux les tasses de café vides. Malten constata notre stupeur, hocha doucement sa calme tête de vieux Vercingétorix d'où tombaient deux longues moustaches grises imperturbables, et confirma:

“Oui, moi, Malten.”

Puis, s'étant renversé dans son fauteuil, en allongeant sur le tapis, par un geste qui lui était familier, sa moindre jambe, celle de Sadowa, il poursuivit en ces termes, et toujours avec une très sage lenteur, la lenteur d'un cerveau myope qui pense pas à pas.

II

“IL y a vingt-cinq ans, j'étais tout jeune marié, tout jeune sous-lieutenant, tout jeune en énormément de choses. Depuis, j'ai vieilli. Elle est morte, ma pauvre jeune femme! et je ne trouve plus guère que par habitude, pour continuer. A cette époque-là, dont je vous parle, nous demeurions à Vienne, naturellement, dans un joli petit intérieur du fau-

bourg de Wieden. Le soir, quand le temps était beau, nous allions nous promener, nous passions par Elisabethbrücke, et les huit statues du pont nous ont vus plus de cent fois, plus de mille fois marcher lentement en nous donnant le bras. Nous cautions. Elle redoutait la guerre, moi je la souhaitais. Nous nous étonnions d'être mari et femme, moi et elle plutôt que tel autre et telle autre, et cela se terminait par des projets d'ordre et de bonheur tranquille. Quelquefois nous discussions sur la façon d'élever les enfants que nous n'avions pas encore. Mais quand le temps n'était pas beau, nous restions enfermés chez nous. Après le repas, on débarrassait la table, on apportait la lampe et il n'y avait pas de plus grand plaisir pour nous que de jouer aux cartes, presque toujours à l'écarté. Nous étions aussi joueurs, aussi mauvais joueurs l'un que l'autre. Quand je perdais je criais, je sonnais de la trompette, je faisais une scène épouvantable. Quand elle perdait, elle se taisait, mais son petit nez se pinçait, ses lèvres tremblaient de colère, et je la devinais aussi malheureuse dans son silence que moi dans mon emportement.

"Un jour cela devint si pénible que nous primes le parti définitif d'en rire, et de faire comme les gamins qui ne jouent pas sérieusement; et alors, en manière de plaisanterie, je commençai à tricher, à tricher tout de bon, très ouvertement. Elle m'imita de son côté, avec autant de sérieux, et c'était de vraies joies d'enfant quand l'un de nous était parvenu à avoir les cinq atouts dans son jeu et qu'il les abattait d'un air candide:

" 'Mais vous trichez, monsieur, s'écriait-elle.

"Et je répondais:

" 'Oui, madame. C'est le seul moyen de gagner!'

"Ah! on était très content, le cœur ne pesait pas triste, et avec un peu de bière fraîche, on avait de tout à fait excellentes soirées.

"Or, c'est vers ce temps que je fus invité pour la première fois chez le général Mohr. Avec quelle joie j'ac-

ceptai cet honneur! Dès l'après-midi, ma pauvre femme avait étalé sur le lit mon uniforme; et comme elle m'aidait tandis que je m'habillais! C'est elle qui m'accrocha le sabre, qui me donna le dernier coup d'œil, et quand elle me dit adieu sur le palier, car elle ne m'accompagnait pas, elle avait dans le regard une telle fierté douce que j'eus, une seconde, la pensée de dire:

" 'Ma chère, je ne vais pas chez le général, tu es ma femme, la meilleure créature au monde, et je reste avec toi, en uniforme, et en uniforme pour toi toute seule.'

"Je n'en fis rien pourtant. Ah! que j'eus tort!

"Lorsque j'arrivai chez le général, croyez que je ne regrettais pas d'y être venu. Il n'y a rien de plus fier et de plus beau que ces réceptions dans notre pays. Ce soir-là, c'était particulièrement magnifique. Il y avait tous les officiers du corps d'armée, il y avait une nuée d'archiducs, et ils sont superbes, nos archiducs, ils vous ont, dans la démarche, dans l'allure, dans la silhouette un je ne sais quoi d'altier, de monarchique, à les croire descendus des chevaux de bronze qu'ils enfourcheront après leur mort quand ils seront statues équestres sur les places avec de grands chapeaux belliqueux où flambent des plumes. Des femmes je ne vous parlerai pas. Elles se pressaient là toutes aussi, nos Viennoises, et blondes, et la peau trempée dans du lait, et les yeux bleus comme de l'eau de source au clair de lune! On tombait amoureux de chacune et de toutes à la fois, surtout si on les regardait danser, car elles vous chipaient l'âme et vous l'emportaient dans les plis de leur robe ailée. Et puis, et puis il y avait Strauss, le grand Strauss, qui conduisait comme Dieu le père! Mais je m'arrête, parce que je sens que je deviendrais ridicule et que je ne veux point vous voir sourire. Moi, je contemplais toutes ces splendeurs avec de l'étonnement joyeux, une certaine fierté de me trouver là, d'en être, et par instants je songeais aussi: 'La petite s'amuserait si elle était avec

moi, oui, et je la mènerais, à mon bras, au buffet, choisir une mousse au café."

III

"J'ARRIVAI ainsi dans un petit salon très diplomatique, de dimensions restreintes—je le vois encore comme à la minute où j'y entrai—un salon aux murs tendus de satin cerise, éclairé par des torchères dorées où brûlaient de très hautes, de très solennelles bougies, et garni de plusieurs tables d'acajou et de drap vert autour desquelles jouaient des hommes âgés, resplendissant de décorations. On y parlait à voix basse ainsi que dans une chapelle, et les accords lointains des orchestres interrompaient seuls, par intervalles, les chuchotements des personnages qui comptaient leurs points, battaient les cartes ou froissaient des jetons de nacre et d'argent. Je fus sur-le-champ fort impressionné; déjà même je m'apprêtais à quitter ce sanctuaire quand, à quelques pas, une voix m'interpella. Je me retournai. C'était mon colonel qui m'avait aperçu et qui me proposait de jouer un écarté avec lui. Je m'inclinai donc et je pris aussitôt la place que venait de laisser vide son partenaire. Plusieurs personnes nous entourèrent, debout, avec des conseils pleins les yeux, et je me souviens que j'éprouvais un sentiment de vraie vanité à être vu ainsi publiquement en compagnie de mon supérieur. Le colonel proposa la partie à cinq florins; j'acceptai. Nous tirâmes pour savoir qui *ferait*. Il amena un sept, moi un valet. J'eus la vole. Ensuite, il joua d'auto-rité et eut la vole à son tour.

"Nous étions deux à deux. C'était à moi de donner les cartes, j'avais le paquet dans la main. Comme je les distribuais, je remarquai, dans un mouvement un peu brusque, la dernière carte en dessous du jeu. C'était un roi de carreau, un splendide roi de carreau, tout rouge. Alors, saisi, enchaîné par l'habitude, je me dis, dans une lueur de malice, qu'il serait amusant de l'avoir, ce roi, pour voir la tête scandalisée de ma chère petite femme; je me crus, en un mot, dans

notre salle à manger du faubourg de Wieden, sous la lampe, un soir d'hiver; et paisiblement, naturellement, je cueillis le roi de carreau, que je retournai avec un air de surprise en déclarant:

"'Tiens! le roi!'"

"Mais je n'eus pas plutôt achevé qu'une pâleur, que je sentais glacée, m'envahit le visage. Le colonel m'avait vu, il s'était arrêté, et il me regardait en silence.

"Haletant, stupide, fou de honte, j'aurais voulu tomber, rouler mort.

"Là-bas, dans les salons, l'orchestre attaquait la jolie reprise des 'Joies de la Vie.' Et le colonel me regardait toujours, de son même regard fixe, dur, méprisant et attristé. Il détourna enfin les yeux et très froidement:

"'Eh bien, puisque vous l'avez, marquez-le.'"

"La partie fut vite terminée. Il perdit. Alors il se leva et, du bout de ses gants blancs, chassant vers moi les cinq florins:

"'Vous avez gagné, monsieur.'"

"J'avais encore mal ressaisi mes esprits, à tel point la douleur et le désespoir me paralysaient. Mais quand je vis mon colonel s'éloigner, je ne voulus pas le laisser partir ainsi.

"C'est un honnête homme, pensai-je, un brave homme, un père de famille, je vais tout lui raconter, comment cela s'est fait malgré moi, et il va rire. Sans doute, il sera le premier à en rire, il me tapera sur l'épaule et tout sera fini.

"Je l'avais rejoint. Dès que je fus à ses côtés, je lui dis, à voix basse et suppliante:

"'Mon colonel—mon colonel—'"

"Mais jamais je ne pus trouver autre chose. Il s'était arrêté, il me regardait comme tout à l'heure, et son regard de nouveau me pénétrait, me brûlait. Alors je compris que j'étais perdu, déshonoré dans son estime; je sentis la piètre invraisemblance de la vérité si je la lui disais, la pauvreté maladroite de cette excuse qu'il prendrait pour un bas mensonge; aussi je courbai la tête, je me tus, et il s'en alla.

"A dater de ce jour, je n'ai plus

aimé mon métier, quoique je fusse le mieux noté de mes camarades; c'est que partout, au quartier, sur le champ de manœuvres, dans les maisons où nous nous rencontrions, je sentais se poser sur moi, sans cesse, le regard de mon colonel, le regard muet qui pensait toujours: 'Lieutenant Malten, vous êtes un voleur.' Enfin, je

fus cependant nommé capitaine au bout de quelque temps. Et puis je la perdis, ma pauvre chère femme, avec qui je trichais. Et puis Sadowa interrompit, comme vous savez, ma belle carrière. Et puis voilà. J'ai peut-être été un peu long, je vous fais mes excuses, messieurs. Maintenant, jouez sans moi."



BALLADE OF DRUDGE

TO foreign fields and pastures new
Old Drudge's daughters flit and fly;
To-day they have Berlin in view,
To-morrow off to Rome they hie.
They pass no place of pleasure by,
And leave no wonder-book unconned.
Mamma goes, too, but papa's shy—
Poor papa's never crossed the pond.

Of languages they know a few,
No tactful native will deny;
Italian, French, and German, too;
Perhaps there's none beneath the sky
That may their lingual skill outvie;
But Drudge, it's odd, was never fond
His tongue at foreign phrase to try—
Poor papa's never crossed the pond.

Somehow he manages to strew
Their paths with flowers, afar and nigh.
He knows that nothing else will do,
For sweets they'll have, though they come high.
Their clothes are up to date, but my!
Late styles and Drudge ill correspond;
His last year's suit will satisfy—
Poor papa's never crossed the pond.

ENVOY

Poor Drudge! Well may he rant and sigh;
His promised word is like his bond.
"The office" knows the reason why
Poor papa's never crossed the pond.

FRANK WALCOTT HUTT.



REASON FOR DOUBT

CHAPPIE—It is reported around that I am engaged.
SHE—Well, you don't believe everything you hear, I hope.

BY THE MONASTERY WALL

By E. Carl Litsey

BROTHER ALOYSIUS was young. He had taken the vows not over a fortnight before, and the rigid asceticism to which he was now subject was galling to a man always used to the pleasures and comforts of life. But the old life was gone—he had resigned it voluntarily, because all of the light went out of it one day and his mind was plunged in darkness. Then when he felt Doubt creeping stealthily toward his soul, he applied for admission to the brotherhood. His novitiate was now over, and his vows would bind him to the end.

In this quiet life of solitude and prayer he felt that he could draw closer to the Creator whom he had come near to denying on that day of his bitter pain. Already his strong soul throbbed a little less painfully, and he was trying to draw a veil over the past. Until this was done he could not be at peace. To forget was the only hope, he told himself, of eternal rest. To live and to move in the same old atmosphere would have meant the annihilation of faith. And so he put away the world he had known.

The coarse brown cassock that enveloped Brother Aloysius's figure did not detract from his appearance. His tall, erect form and broad, square shoulders made him conspicuous among his silent brethren. Beneath his cowl was the same strong, expressive face and the calm gray eyes.

The first time Brother Aloysius was set to work in the garden he smiled a little as he took the hoe and went about his task. His hands were white and soft, but the sun and the handle of the implement would

quickly make them brown and rough. No matter. Humiliation of the flesh was to be part of his life now. There were some trees in the garden, but the vegetables about which he was to stir the earth did not grow near them. It was mid-afternoon, and soon his hands were blistered and the perspiration ran in streams from his pulsing forehead. He stopped for a moment and looked around. There, in the shadow of the wall, were some growing potatoes that needed attention. He gathered up his cassock and walked toward the shade, noting as he did so that part of the wall had fallen down—at one place it was not much higher than his knees. He thought he would report this when his respite from labor came, and throwing back his cowl so that the breeze might play about his head, he bent again to his work.

Suddenly he stopped. Peeping from the grass almost under his feet were two blue violets, side by side. Another stroke of his hoe and they would have been uprooted. And as he gazed a face grew about them. Those trailing ferns were her hair; those gauzy cobwebs were the lace she wore about her throat. And the past that he had striven and prayed to forget rose up in might. He shuddered, as if an icy wind had blown on him, and pressing his lips hard together, raised his eyes to heaven for strength.

But in the gap in the wall before him was the same face—this time in the flesh, and in the soft blue eyes was a look of pity and of love.

"Salome!" he gasped, and yet again, "Salome!"

"Why are you here, Henry, and in

this garb?" she asked, quietly, but the roses on her breast were fluttering.

"Why?—why? *You* ask me why?"

"You told me that you loved me."

"Don't taunt me, Salome! Are you as wicked as you are beautiful? I'm trying to forget—to forget!" and he closed his eyes while a spasm of pain shook his form.

"Forget! Can you forget *me*?"

She placed her hands on the crumbling stones and leaned toward him, while on her lips and in her eyes gathered that smile which had brought him to her feet.

"God help me—no!" And as he bowed his head his strong frame shook again.

"Listen, Henry. That letter was a lie—the plot of a jealous woman! She practiced my handwriting till the forgery was perfect, then, in her hatred, she sent it to you. You dropped it on your library table, and it found its

way to me. You should have come to me, but the blow was so great that you could not think, and in your despair you came here. Henry, I have come to take you away."

He shook his head dumbly.

"You shall come," she continued, "else your love was a sham! Is your hard, iron bed softer than my arms? Is the black bread you eat sweeter than the honey of my mouth?"

"My vows, Salome!" he answered, in desperation, looking her full in the face. "They are taken, and for life!"

"Your vows to me were given first and are just as sacred. I hold you to them."

She was leaning closer, and the perfume from her garments reached him.

"Come, Henry, my love," she whispered, in the old, caressing accents.

His hand let the hoe fall on the fresh earth, then sought her own.

And thus, led by love, he passed into the world again.



A FOOD-FLOWER FANCY

WHY should the gobbler, when the Autumn blows
Its golden pipe, that charms the squirrel's playtime,
Upon his fragile wishbone sport a rose
That breathes the sunny spirit of the Maytime?

About as inconsistent as a fad
Of decoration, while the sleighbell jingles,
'Twould be to put an aster on the shad,
To gleam and glimmer on his silver shingles.

The gentian should the gobbler's prow adorn
In Autumn's mellow yellow hocus-pocus—
The shad should wear when Martius blows his horn,
To be *au fait*, the olden golden crocus.

And so all edibles that e'er indulge
In *boutonnieres*, though minus rhyme or reason,
Should on the hypercritic gain the bulge
By wearing only buds that fit the season.

R. K. MUNKITTRICK.

THE AMERICAN WIDOW

By Prince Vladimir Vaniatsky

WHEN *la veuve Americaine* first came to Petersburg it fell to me, Dmitri Ivanovitch Nordoff, to have the honor of presenting her name as a toast to my regiment. This was on the occasion of the regular monthly dinner. I was at that time captain in the regiment "Grand Duke Michael," on duty at Peterhof.

There was considerable mystery about *la veuve Americaine*, as everyone called her, though there was more than one American widow in Petersburg that season. The supposed mystery, however, but added piquancy to the charm of the lady. This widow, God knows, was never intended to be a widow. Yet one she was, by the inscrutable decree of Destiny, and she was also the most beautiful woman in Petersburg.

She was wealthy, very wealthy. Even in the beginning she would not be content with the cramped accommodations of a hotel. No; she must have a great house, a palace. Of course, she obtained what she desired. There was a palace vacant on the Quai de la Cour, and after a few formalities with the agents of the estate to which it belonged, she took possession.

There was one peculiarity about the beautiful widow. She cared nothing for her compatriots in Petersburg. She maintained a formal acquaintance with the Embassy people, but did not become at all intimate with them. She did not meet Petersburg society through them, as her letters to the set in which she moved were from a duchess of France. Yet the Americans were only too glad to

claim the widow, though she paid so little attention to them.

"Do you know *our* Mrs. Ogden Alexander?" an American would ask a Russian.

"Oh, yes; the great Madame Alexander," the Russian would respond, and the American would nod in gratified pride.

Did a Russian ask Mrs. Alexander if she knew someone or other in America, she would respond in a delightfully bored manner that she probably did. She was the *grande dame* in her every movement and word, and that is more than can be said of some women who bear the greatest names of Holy Russia. From a social standpoint she was the rage of the season. From the Grand Duchess Vladimir down, the most aristocratic section of Russian society was proud to be included in *la veuve Americaine's* list of friends. There was great rivalry to obtain invitations to her dinners. And those dinners! They were small—never over twenty covers, and every appointment was perfect. One's neighbors at the table were sure to be just the people one would wish to have next to him! That was an art in which Madame Alexander excelled, the proper placing of dinner guests. Then the cuisine and wines were quite beyond criticism, and there was left nothing to be desired.

But the woman herself?

Did you ever see a tall, slender tree that bowed and swayed with consummate grace before the winds? She had that same grace. Did you ever see the brilliant color of a poppy in July, flaunting its scarlet against the golden grain in the wheat fields? Her

lips flaunted their scarlet against the cream of her skin in just the same manner. And her eyes—ah, there is nothing on God's earth with which to compare them. They were black, deep and fathomless, with a sparkle and a flash like sable gems.

I knew in the beginning that it would be only a question of time until I should be suing for the love of this most beautiful woman. Day by day, as I saw her again and again, the conviction grew and was more and more a part of my life. And yet I could never bring myself to speak. I, who had been a man of the world for many years, and who had had as many loves as one can remember, could not tell her that I loved her. A man of the world with his grand passion may be as timid and bashful as a youth before his first shrine.

There were many opportunities when I could have told her what was in my heart. There were skating parties on the glistening surface of the frozen Neva; there were secluded conversations in the drawing-rooms of her palace; there were long drives in the *troika* behind my three black Orloffs; there were meetings at social gatherings. But when we were left alone I could talk only of the superficial things of life. I, who was once noted for the extravagance of my flatteries, could not bring myself to utter a few complimentary words concerning the effect of a gown, or the contrast between a rose and the beautifully formed hand that held it. Then I would go to my own home, and seated before the blazing fire, imagine a thousand phrases that I might have said, or countless ways in which I could have shown my feelings even without words. I suffered.

It was the arrival of my mother, the Countess Tatania, in Petersburg which first changed the current of events. By virtue of our family she was one of the ladies-in-waiting to the Dowager Empress, and, in fact, a lifelong friend of Her Majesty. My mother had been in Paris during the Winter, and her return to Petersburg was entirely unexpected.

So, when on a Tuesday I received a telegram stating that she would arrive on Thursday, I at once summoned the butler and ordered that our palace be put in its usual formal state. I had kept bachelor hall for some months, so that it was hardly fitted for the reception of such a particular person as the Countess Tatania.

In due time, on Thursday, although the train was five hours late, owing to a heavy fall of snow in the province, my mother arrived, accompanied by her maids, her pet leopard and her own special ebony roulette table. She kissed me with a great deal of warmth, sent me to see that the leopard was properly taken care of, and proceeded to supervise the unpacking of her trunks, scolding the maids meanwhile for their carelessness.

"So, Dmitri Ivanovitch," she remarked that night, as we sat at dinner, "you are playing the devoted to Madame Alexander——"

"—*la veuve Americaine*," added I.

"Precisely," my mother remarked, as she took a dainty sip of Château Yquem.

There was silence for a few moments.

"*La veuve* is enormously wealthy," my mother remarked, looking at the rose-cut chandelier that hangs in the centre of the dining-room.

"Indeed!" said I, laconically, knowing exactly what my mother was driving at.

"Money is a great thing," said my mother, smiling at me in the easiest manner possible.

"It is, indeed," I assented.

"And our wheat crops show decided shortages of late years," she continued.

"But the increase in production at the salt mine more than covers the deficiency in the wheat," I answered her.

"Bah!" cried my mother, in disgust; "we Nordoffs are not so poor that we are obliged to figure the sources and amounts of our revenues."

"True," I admitted, not caring to

remind my mother that she had started the discussion as to the revenues of our house. My mother, who was a Posadowsky, has the violent temper for which that noble house is celebrated.

"Well," said she, with a fine air of changing the topic, "it seems to me that you are at an age when you should find a suitable mate. You must not let the old Muscovite family of Nordoff die away, for, as you know, you are the last male member of the house."

"That is so," I said, as if the idea had come to me for the first time. Then, with an air of enlightenment, I asked: "How would the young Princess Dolgourki suit you?"

"Abominably!" cried my mother. "Why, she squints and has bad teeth."

"The Circassian countess whom we met at Nijni?"

My mother snorted. "She has the morals of a—of a—Circassian!" she cried.

"Madame Golchow?" I asked, smiling.

"Madame Golchow!" gasped my mother. "Glory be to God, Dmitri Ivanovitch; you don't mean that?"

"Why not?"

"The daughter of a serf on your father's estate?"

"But a very wealthy woman, and you know that money is a great thing, especially as our revenues from the wheat crops are diminishing." I lighted a cigarette and waited for the storm.

"Just God!" cried my mother, rising and sweeping from the table, "is it possible that I should ever have given birth to as stupid and headstrong a son as this!" and she left the dining-room.

I sat at the table ruminating over affairs until my valet came and reminded me that I had seats at the opera, and that I had an engagement to call for Count von Prizwald, of the German Embassy. So I rose, was helped into my wraps and passed through the three vestibules to my waiting carriage. The opera of the evening was Wagner's "Die Wal-

küre," and the Count, who was a great enthusiast over the works of his fellow countryman, was to point out to me the great beauties of the production.

I arrived at von Prizwald's house rather late and found him awaiting me in a state of mind bordering on frenzy. His eyeglass had fallen from his eye, his dress shirt was crumpled and his orders hung in a disarranged medley on his dress coat.

"Come, come!" he cried, excitedly, catching me by the arm as soon as we were seated; "have your man drive like the devil; we must not miss one bar of this divine opera." To soothe my friend I gave orders that the horses were not to be spared, and in consequence we were in my box some moments before the curtain rose. In the midst of a very learned dissertation on Wagner and his school I espied *la veuve Americaine* in a neighboring box, and returned her gracious salutation. The Count von Prizwald, wrapped in the glory of Wagner's music, was oblivious to the world and failed to notice that I was far more interested in the occurrences in Madame Alexander's box than in the opera. At the end of the first act I made my way to madame's box, pressed her hand slightly, greeted those who were fortunate enough to be in her company, and asked permission to call on the following afternoon. She shook her graceful head.

"I am sorry that I must say no," she said. "Sir Charles Vyain is to be spared from his duties at the British Embassy long enough to initiate me into the mysteries of bridge. Then, also, I must go to a charity bazaar, of which I am a patroness, not to mention an appointment with my tailor. However, if you care to come and dine alone with me at seven-thirty, I shall be ever so happy to have you. Then we can go on to the Winter Palace together for the state reception."

"Nothing would make me happier," I answered, pressing her hand. After a moment's small talk I left the

box, meeting one of the Grand Dukes just as I left. He waved me a salutation, saying: "All Russia worships at the shrine of *la veuve!*"

I did not see her again until the following evening. I arrived at her palace in the Quai de la Cour punctually at fifteen minutes past seven. Her dinner was invariably served at seven-thirty, and if those whom she invited were not on time it made little or no difference to her.

"There is no one for whom I would ruin my dinner," she told a Serene Highness from Germany one night. He had arrived late, accustomed to having dinners wait for his appearance. The German was indignant, and vowed that he would never again dine at "that woman's." He did not, for another invitation was never extended him, though he begged my good offices to secure him one.

I entered the small drawing-room where Madame Alexander always received her more intimate friends. She was waiting. From the sable aigrette that finished her hair-dressing to the toe of her slipper she was in black—dead, lustreless black. Her gown was of velvet, made on simple lines, and without a relieving bit of lace or chiffon. Not a jewel shed its light nor a flower tempted a trite comparison. Her face was white and cold, and her lips, though poppy-red, were like the dead color on a painter's palette. I bowed to kiss her gloved hand, and thrilled with the knowledge that it was cold, even through her glove.

She smiled at the salute—a smile that was a travesty of her usual happy laugh—hard, cynical, cold and worldly. It was as if she said: "Down, man; tell me that you love me, and in your heart confess that my millions are more to you than the love of my heart."

"Why so gloomily gowned to-night?" I asked, as we sat at dinner in the vast dining-hall.

"I have wearied of color," she responded.

"And no gems," I said, idly.

"No gems," she answered, slowly, her eyes looking into mine.

"You are to go thus to the Winter Palace, without a bit of color or a jewel?" I asked, wondering what strange fancy had come to her.

"I shall make no change," she responded, and smiled at me wickedly across her wineglass. Her mood had changed. She was no longer weary-eyed and weary-voiced. Her smile was a challenge. It was tender, sensuous. It dared me to tell her of my love for her; it dared me to taste the glory of her kisses. But I resisted, and forced myself to talk of other things—the excellence of a new painter's work, the charm of an old writer's verses, the brilliancy of the season, the return of my mother, Count Antioeff's card scandal, and a hundred and one other things. But that maddening, thrilling smile never left her lips. "Come and kiss me while you may," they said.

At last we rose from the table and passed through splendid apartments to a little music-room that overlooked the Quai. She took her place at the piano without my request, which we both knew was unnecessary. Her name, Sarah, was Eastern, and when she played the tender melodies of the East, with their strange, subtle under-chord of tenderness and sorrow, I conceived her to be a reincarnation of some long-dead Oriental empress. Soon a change came to her playing, and her voice—a small, carefully trained voice—rose in some of those strange airs that the Russ peasants know; the songs that have no hope, no joy or glory in them, the songs of an ineffable misery and apathy. I left my chair and went to her. I seized her hands in mine. "You shall not, you must not, sing those songs!" I cried.

"Why?" she asked, making no effort to take her hands from mine.

"Because they are the songs of unhappiness, of misery, of hopelessness!" I answered.

"Then why should I not sing them?" she demanded, her white throat quivering. "I have known

unhappiness, misery and hopelessness; aye, I know them even now."

"You should sing only the songs of love, of life and of happiness," I said. "As to your misery and hopelessness, let me take them on my shoulders, and let me prove to you the strength of my love." She made no answer, but lifted her lips to me in a way no man could mistake.

After a moment, as I was about to speak, she laid a finger on my lips. "You must say nothing," she whispered. "I have much to tell you to-night," she continued, after a moment's silence, "but it is now time for us to go to the palace. Is there not some secluded spot there where we can talk?"

"Yes," I answered, remembering a delightful little room apart from the state apartments not easy of access.

Our drive to the palace was in silence; there was nothing for either of us to say just then, though we both knew that in the hours to come there would be much to say.

The crowded chambers of the great palace presented a sight not to be equaled in splendor by any court of the world. There was the usual flash of gems and glitter of orders; the usual display of beautiful arms and necks and of equally hideous ones; the usual smiling, bowing, hypocritical crowd. Among them all passed and repassed the tall, slender figure of the American widow, distinguished in her simple gown of black. A French diplomat bowed to her.

"Ah, madame, why do you return to mourning?" he asked.

"Because of something that is to happen," she answered, coldly, and passed on.

Not long after that we separated, going our own ways. It was probably two hours before we met again to speak, though we saw each other across spaces in the throngs that filled the vast apartments. At last, her lips smiling in a weary fashion, she came to me and said:

"Now, Dmitri Ivanovitch, take me where we may have our talk."

Eagerly I led the way through the crowded chambers to the corridor that terminated in a small suite of apartments which had no definite use. They were dimly lighted and reposeful. My companion sank wearily on a sofa with what seemed to me divine grace. I drew a cushioned footstool near her and seated myself at her feet. I took one of her hands in mine—the apartment was so secluded that I had no reason to fear an intruder.

I caressed the hand I held. She smiled. Then she leaned over and kissed me, calling me endearing names. After a few moments she straightened up from the reclining position in which she sat. An eager, feverish light came into her eyes. Her cheeks grew flushed beyond their ordinary exquisite color. Then she spoke.

"There is that which I must tell you, Dmitri Ivanovitch," she said.

I bowed my head and pressed my cheek to her hand.

"First, I am not an American, but a Russian."

I raised my head. "Then you are dearer and nearer than ever to me," I said, "for I love my country and its people."

"Secondly," she went on, in a strained, unnatural voice, "I am a Russian Jew."

I sprang to my feet, throwing my arms around her. I laughed.

"I see, beloved," I cried, "that you are but testing my love—don't try any more. I love you, and you are dearer to me than anyone else in all the world, no matter what absurd test you may put me to."

She suffered my embrace indifferently.

"I was born here in Petersburg," she went on, as if I had said nothing, "in a squalid, dirty street, in a squalid, dirty house. Everything around me was noisome and poverty-stricken. The walls of the cedar house were damp, often wet; vermin invested them, and only the lowest and most miserable of the metropolis shrank home there at night. You,

the aristocrat, have never even seen that portion of the city. My father, one of the despised Jews, was a tailor in a small shop not far from us. His wages were pitiful, and I can remember many a time when we were without tea, or bread, or meat. Indeed, meat was a rare luxury with us. My father was a man of some little education, which he wasted in studying the Talmud and the books on Judaism. At nights strange men, intimate friends of his, would come and discuss wonderful points of religion with him, while I, a girl of ten, lay on a pallet in one corner of the room and watched them. My mother was shrewish. She would pour invectives on the heads of these students of the Talmud. She berated my father because he did not use his education as an under clerk in some mercantile establishment. When I was eleven I was placed at work in a factory, where the meagre sum I earned helped defray the expenses of our living. Things went from bad to worse. My father neglected his tailoring to devote himself to the study of his beloved books. Then the police became suspicious, and we were watched. My father was suspected of being a political plotter. He was not; nothing was further from his dear, muddled old brain.

"Then he was discharged from his position. He could not obtain another place. The support of the family fell on me. I had grown older in the meantime. I was twelve. I rebelled against the hardness of life. My days were miserable and my nights joyless. Sometimes, when work was scarce at the factory, I would walk long, weary blocks to reach the glittering and brilliant Nevsky Prospekt. I would walk slowly along, watching the *droshkies* as they passed, filled with happy, laughing occupants. Young officers, resplendent in their uniforms, brushed by and never noticed the slender child who stood in her ragged clothes and watched them. I would steal eagerly to the shop windows, gazing in at the wonderful displays. At last, when the

dusk came to the sky, I would creep home to our miserable room, to lie on my pallet with my whole soul filled with hunger for the things which were not for me, the daughter of a Jew. But when sleep came, I would dream glorious, roseate dreams, in which the young officers whom I had seen on the Nevsky spoke to me as they did to the handsomely attired young women who also passed up and down the Prospekt. In these dreams I wore beautiful clothes and jewels from the glittering displays I had seen in the jewelers' windows."

She ceased for a second, and I held her closer to me. Then she went on:

"At last a change came. My mother's brother, a young, energetic man, had gone to America years before. He had become a successful vender of second-hand clothes in New York. Fond of his only sister, whom he remembered as a young and fairly pretty woman, he sent us enough money to enable us to join him in America. My mother was in raptures. My father solemnly knelt and gave thanks to the Lord of Hosts. And I—I left the factory, paid one last, lingering visit to the Nevsky Prospekt, and we started on the long journey to America.

"Never shall I forget that journey. Crowded into the steerage of the steamer were hundreds of emigrants. Coarse, repulsive and vulgar, they formed a spectacle horrible in the extreme. Foul imprecations sounded continually in my ears, and shameless actions covered my cheeks with blushes. It was a nightmare of the greatest horror. Often the saloon passengers would come and look at us in the same manner that they might go to a menagerie and stare at the beasts.

"At last we reached New York. We were crowded like sheep into the emigrant office. The officials pushed us here and shoved us there. No one gave any thought to our comfort. Strange peoples from strange lands were also there. At last my uncle came to claim us. He was startled. He did not know his sister. The pic-

ture he had carried with him for years was that of a young, good-looking woman. She who greeted him was old, the stamp of misery and privation unmistakably on her face. He took us to his home, three small rooms above his clothing store. They were clean and neat, but not what I had dreamed of. His letters had been filled with assurances of his success. I had expected a house, handsome like those outside of which I had dreamed in far-off Petersburg. The street where my uncle carried on his business was noisome and dirty, but the house was substantial, and, unlike the old house in Petersburg, which was frequently inundated by the rising of the Neva, was also dry. We had coarse, substantial food in plenty. I was sent to a free school after I had mastered the rudiments of the English language. My father obtained employment in a tailoring establishment, for his work with the needle was of the finest. He came to be considered of importance in the synagogue, owing to his learning in the Talmud. On the Sabbath we went with him to the services. After a while my uncle lent my father enough money to start a tailoring place of his own. It was small, in a basement; and at first only cleaning, repairing and pressing were given him. But after a while he began to make clothes.

"At that time I was sixteen, but not the sixteen of the average Jewish girl. I was undeveloped, slender, and they called me ugly. The other girls of my age had their 'young men,' but no young man ever looked at me with eyes of admiration. Nor did I desire it. I had my dream officers from the Nevsky, with their handsome faces and glittering uniforms. I told no one of my dreams. I could not bear to be laughed at, and I knew that laughter would greet me if I told of my dreams.

"Two more years went by. I was eighteen. I began to develop. My sallow skin became clear and richly colored. My hair was the admiration of all the girls I knew. My figure rounded out. At last they called me

the most beautiful girl at the synagogue. I helped my father in his work at the tailoring shop, and the young men came there often. I had several offers of marriage, which, to the consternation of my parents, I refused. But my uncle was pleased. 'Let her wait,' he said, 'and her beauty will gain her a husband different from these who have offered themselves. He will be a great man—a gentleman.'

"Yet another year passed, and my parents thought me doomed to be an old maid. But I took care that my beauty should not fade. On Sundays, and whenever I had a spare moment, I would go out into the suburbs and walk. The fresh, sweet air, so unlike the crowded downtown, and the vigorous exercise, kept the roses in my cheeks and the elasticity in my steps. With a contemptuous amusement I watched the girls of my own age fade and break from comeliness into hideousness, borne down by the misery of matrimony and motherhood.

"Then, drawn by the local fame I had acquired, a man came into the street from the upper part of town. He was well dressed and handsome. He had some work for my father to do, so he said, and gave him the address of an apartment house to which my father was to send for some clothes that needed cleaning and pressing. The man came often. I grew to dream of him; he seemed the American reincarnation of the officers from the Nevsky. I suppose he was very much like the men who had become to me such beautiful ideals. I know them now, the hollow mockery of their lives and their vapid, vulgar brains. But then I imagined them good and noble—the regulation fairy-prince style of men. The fancy was not strange for a girl whose young life was divided between the miserable quarter down by the Neva and the sordid environs of Baxter street.

"Of course, it was the customary story where the man was concerned. He was handsome and wealthy. After a while I went up town to a

dainty apartment. But I went under no illusion. He made plain to me just the position I should occupy. I didn't care. I loved him, and would go with him at any price. He loved me, too, and was more than kind. He had me sent to one of the best convent schools in the city, so that my education became as good as that of any girl I met. He wasn't a good man—he never had been, nor did he claim to be. But he was constant.

"At the end of a year he was taken with a bad cold. His old life told on him, and the cold merged into pneumonia. He became seriously ill, and it was in my apartment that he died. But before his death he gave me the name that I bear to-day, and with it his great fortune. I do not tell you of my misery or my heartache—I cannot do that.

"After his death I went abroad. I traveled. Then my thoughts turned to Russia, and I came here to see the old land once more. Quite a change from the wretched tenement house down by the Neva to the Quai de la Cour! Quite a change from the wretched girl who watched the officers on the Nevsky to the woman whose salutation they are to-day glad to return." She laughed almost hysterically. "*Et voilà tout*," she concluded.

"*Et voilà tout*," I thought. That was all. The woman I loved belonged to the accursed race of the Jews, and had been an unwedded wife. I knew not what to do. I loved her—God help me, I love her even to-day. But a Nordoff, a Nordoff, to wed her! I saw her as my wife. I saw our great happiness. Then I saw the inevitable. Her past life must become known at some future time. I saw myself bowed with shame. I saw her, a countess of the house of Nordoff, pointed out to the world as an adventuress, a woman whose birth and life would debar her from association with anyone of rank or birth. And I saw myself pointed out, as people said: "There is a man who married a woman whose millions salved over her wretched birth and life." It took but a second for all this to pass through

my mind. She sat watching me. I rose.

"Madame," I said, "allow me to escort you to the state apartments."

She, too, rose. Her hands grasped my arm. Her eyes, eloquent with the tragedy of a lifetime, read mine.

"I knew it would be so," she said. "Yet I could not come to you until I had told you all."

When we came to the crowded apartments where the world of Petersburg was assembled, she dropped my arm.

"Good-bye," she said, and disappeared in the throng. I sought her again in vain.

The night was one of misery to me. But my love triumphed. When the morning came I drove to her house in the Quai de la Cour. It was closed. No response came to my continued efforts to gain admission. Later in the day I went again. The house was closed, the door boarded over. I went to the estate agent from whom she had leased the house. Madame Alexander had left Petersburg the night before, he said, and had ordered the house closed. He did not know where she had gone.

For two years I have hunted for her. The whole world has been ransacked. Even the secret police of Russia have hunted for her. No clue or track of her has been found.

This Winter I am to marry a princess of the house of Beloslav. My mother engineered the match. My bride-to-be is not beautiful, but she is enormously wealthy, and is blood-kin to the Imperial family, as her grandfather was an Imperial Grand Duke who contracted a morganatic alliance.

I hate her! . . . I hate her!

I hate myself, because I was weak and a coward where the world's opinion was concerned. I hate myself because I dashed the cup of happiness from my lips. Yet I am Dmitri Ivanovitch Nordoff, a count of Russia, and Gentleman of the Bed Chamber to His Imperial Majesty the Tsar. There are many who envy me, but when they have read this they will no longer do so.

A BIT OF YALE BLUE

AND A PEACEFUL "P. S."

THE cause of it all was a piece of Yale-blue ribbon. The wind, which was blowing at a furious rate, also had something to do with the case. Furthermore, the hot air that came in blasts from a grating in Twenty-third street made a balloon of her skirts, to the delight of a number of small boys and, as a climax to her troubles, she stumbled and nearly fell to her knees in front of Jack Sandford, who was sauntering along in search of a present for his paternal grandmother.

"I beg your pardon!" said the young lady.

"Granted!" replied Jack, promptly. "Are you hurt?"

"Not a bit!" she gasped. "I don't see how—" Then she looked down and saw that one of her silk shoelaces had come untied. "Oh, dear!" she said, impatiently.

"Let me fix it for you!" said Jack, impulsively.

She blushed, and replied, hurriedly: "Oh, no, thank you! It's broken!"

Jack instinctively felt in his pockets for something with which to repair the damage.

"If I only had—oh! I know!" In an instant he had whipped off a piece of blue ribbon he was wearing in celebration of a contest between his college and Princeton that day, and handed it to the charmer in distress.

"Perhaps that will do," he said. "I'm afraid it's rather gaudy, but it will last till you reach home."

"That's lovely!" replied the lady. "Thanks so much!" Then, with a bewitching smile, "I hope your college will win to-day." And she tripped away, leaving Jack with his hat in his hand and his mouth open.

Two years passed, and it was the anniversary of the college competition. Jack had not forgotten his romantic adventure. He had fallen in love a hundred times since, but he still kept a corner of his heart for the girl with the blue ribbon. He had unfortunately forgotten what her features were like, but he labored under an extremely improbable hope that some day he should meet her again.

This hope was in his mind when he wended his way to the house of his latest conquest. It so happened—Jack confessed he didn't know how—that before the day was over he found himself engaged to the daughter of his hostess. It might have been the excitement he experienced over the fact that his college proved victorious, or it might have been the knowledge that the young lady was possessed of a sum that would afford him a substantial competence for the rest of his natural life, which brought him to a declaration of his affection; but certain it was that at the hour of ten o'clock his life contract was made.

Confidence begat confidence, and in the exhilaration of the occasion he related to his inamorata his experience with the blue-ribbon lady.

"I thought at the time," he sighed, "I should never marry anyone but her!"

A roguish twinkle came into her eyes, and she whispered, "Then it was you!"

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"Why, you're my hero! Wait a minute." And she ran out of the room, leaving Jack somewhat mystified. In five minutes she returned, with her hands behind her.

"Do you think you would know the shoe if you saw it again?"

Jack was a trifle doubtful, but said he thought he would. She produced a dainty but dusty old shoe and handed it to him.

"Does this look anything like it?"

There in the eyelets was a piece of Yale-blue ribbon! Jack started.

"You were that girl?"

"I suppose so. It looks like it."

"Then the Yale-blue tie——"

"Binds you to me!"

They were married, but whether they lived happily ever afterward his-

tory deponeth not. However, there was one incident during the honeymoon which is worth recording.

"Jack, dear," said the blushing bride, "you remember that affair about the Yale-blue ribbon?"

Jack said he remembered.

"Well, what I told you wasn't true."

Jack murmured, sleepily, "I knew it!"

P. S.—And they were both satisfied.

ERNEST GEORGE.



ASPIRATION

MY soul seeks for esthetic food;
My joy in life is to pursue
The True, the Beautiful, the Good—
That, dear, is why I come to you.

I often feel a deep dejection
The highest is to me denied,
And yet I know I'm near perfection—
When I am sitting by your side.

GEORGE BIRDSEYE.



MAKING THE HEART FONDER

SHE—They say she married him to get rid of him.

HE—It must be true. I understand she doesn't kick at paying his club dues.



REMOVED THE CAUSE

RIVERS (*a neighbor*)—Your dog doesn't howl any more. Is he dead?

BRIDGES—No; I had the piano tuned.



MIGHT BE MISTAKEN

HE—You are the only girl I ever loved.

SHE—Don't be too sure about it. You haven't landed me yet.